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CONSIDERATIONS UPON CHRISTIAN TRUTHS AND CHRISTIAN DUTIES

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MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

BY

BISHOP CHALLONER.

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A NEW EDITION REVISED BY

BISHOP VERTUE.

"Blessed is the man whose will is in the law of the Lord, and he shall meditate on His law day and night.

"And he shall be like a tree, which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season.

"And his leaf shall not fall off, and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper."—PSALM i. 1, 2, 3.

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TO

HIS EMINENCE,

HENRY EDWARD,

CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER,

TO WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN TO REAP IN JOY MUCH

THAT WAS SOWN IN TEARS,

This Edition

OF

THE WORK OF A HOLY PREDECESSOR

IS, WITH PERMISSION,

HUMBLY AND AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

In presenting this new and revised edition of a book so well known and esteemed as the Meditations of the Right Reverend Bishop Challenor, a few words of explanation seem necessary. Nearly twenty years ago it was suggested to the editor to begin the task that is at last completed. Many peculiarities in style had become almost grotesque; some sentences, through printer's errors perhaps originally, were obscure and scarcely intelligible, and a large amount of redundant words gave a cumbersome and heavy tone to the Meditations, especially when read aloud. To prune with reverent hand, and to make such alterations only as seemed necessary, has been the care of the present editor. The work has, at any rate, been done with sufficient deliberation. Begun in Bermuda some eighteen years ago, it has been continued from time to time as leisure permitted, and is now brought to conclusion under the sunny sky of Malta. To extend the use of these truly excellent Meditations has been the only object in view. If that be attained, the editor will feel that a very laborious and difficult task has been well rewarded.

J. V.

Malta, *November* 1879.

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

Dear Reader,—I here present thee with a set of Meditations for every day in the year, collected from the Word of God and the writings of the saints and servants of God. The subjects are digested in such a manner as to take in the whole Christian doctrine, with all the mysteries and solemnities celebrated by the Church throughout the year, and all the practical lessons of the Gospel. The great truths of the Christian religion are here briefly proposed in their own plain native colours; upon every subject there are three considerations, which may serve to entertain the devout Christian for half an hour or longer, according to the time he allows himself for the exercise of daily meditation; and every meditation is concluded with pious resolutions, which may determine the soul to decline, with all her strength for the time to come, from all evil, and to dedicate herself in good earnest to the love and service of her Maker, by a serious application of all her powers to good.

As to the preparation that ought always to be premised; to avoid needless repetitions, I have not marked it down at the beginning of each meditation, but must here put thee in mind, once for all, that thou must ever begin this exercise by the faith and remembrance of the presence of God, and by humbly imploring His light, grace, and assistance. Thou must also observe that these considerations are not

designed to be a matter of barren study or speculation of the brain; but to be the seeds of pious affections in the heart, which affections are looked upon by spiritual writers as the principal part of mental prayer; as tending directly to bring the soul to her God and to unite her to Him by divine love. I have not set down upon each subject all the various affections that might be drawn from every consideration; as well because this would have been an endless work, and liable to frequent repetitions, as because these affections are usually taught by a better master, *viz.*, the Spirit of God, to all such as diligently frequent His school, which He holds in the interior of those souls that seriously exercise themselves in mental prayer.

However, as it may be of some help to many, especially to beginners, I shall here point out the different kinds of affections which may be excited in the soul, according to the different subjects of her meditation, and the degrees of her advancement in a spiritual life. Such are: 1. Acts of a lively *faith* of the divine truths set before the soul in the considerations, and a bowing down of all the powers of the soul to adore the Sovereign Truth that is thus pleased to reveal Himself to His little ones. 2. Acts of *fear* of the judgments of God, of His wrath enkindled against impenitent sinners, and of all the dreadful consequences of sin, and the punishments inflicted upon it by divine justice, both in this world and in the world to come. 3. Acts of *hope* and *confidence* in the power, mercy, and goodness of God, represented in the meditation; in the fidelity of His divine promises made in favour of penitent sinners, and in the inexhaustible treasures of merit and grace purchased for us all, by the labours, sweat, and blood of the Son of God. 4. Acts of the *love* of God, from the consideration of the goodness of God in Himself, of all His divine attributes, beauty, and perfections; of His eternal love for us, and all His bene-

fits to us, and of the passion and death of His Son for the love of us. 5. Acts of *shame* and *confusion* for our manifold sins against His infinite goodness; and for our base ingratitude, by which we have returned so much evil for so much good. 6. Acts of *repentance* and *contrition* for our sins; and of an humble accusation of them all at the feet of Christ; of a horror and hatred for them; and even a hatred of ourselves for having been so base and wicked; with earnest supplications for mercy for what is past, and an offering of ourselves to a penitential life for the time to come. 7. Acts of *adoration* of the Divine Majesty, of *praise* and *thanksgiving* to Him for all His benefits; of *invitation* of all the angels and saints, and of all His works to glorify Him; and of an *oblation* of our whole being, and of all that we have, to His glory. 8. Acts of *joy* in Him, and of *congratulation* with Him, that He is what He is; of *zeal* for the greater glory of His name, for the advancement of His kingdom, and the executing of His will; of *desire* that all the world may be converted to Him; and that all may know Him, and serve Him. 9. Acts of *humility* and *contempt* of ourselves; of embracing the cross, and *resignation* to God's blessed will in all things; and of a total *dedication* and consecration of ourselves to be the servants of His divine love. 10. Acts of *desire* to *imitate* the virtues of our dear Redeemer, of His blessed Mother, and of all the Saints, to attend to His heavenly lessons, to imprint them deeply in our hearts, and to sigh continually after Him. 11. Acts of *compassion* for our Lord in His sufferings, with a great sense of what He has endured for us; and of all the outrages that are daily offered to Him by wilful sinners. 12. Acts of a general *slight* and abhorrence of all evil; and resolutions to embrace and follow all Christian virtues. Lastly, fervent petitions and prayers for the divine grace and assistance in all things.

These affections may also be exercised in the way of *colloquies* with our Lord, or with His saints, according to the exigence of the subject; sometimes treating with Him as with a parent; other times as with a friend, or a spouse; other times as with our physician, representing to Him all the maladies of our soul; at other times casting ourselves at His feet, like Magdalene, making a general confession of our sins to Him, as to our high priest and the true Pastor of our souls, &c. Ever representing Him as near us; or rather as within us, and in the very centre of our being; and treating with Him as we would do if we saw Him visibly present with us; and ever concluding our addresses to Him with an oblation of our whole selves to Him, to execute all His wills.

As to the necessity of this holy exercise of meditation, and the great advantages of the daily practice of it, I shall refer thee to what thou shalt find under the heads of *consideration* and *mental prayer;* and I shall only add here, that a diligence in this exercise is the great means to bring all good to the soul, and to conduct her safe to her Sovereign Good. The devil, who very well knows that such souls as apply themselves seriously to mental prayer will be none of his, makes all possible efforts to divert Christians from this application by a thousand impostures; and to frighten them with phantoms of imaginary difficulties; but this very opposition of his ought to convince us of the great importance of this exercise, and to make us the more eager to pursue it, in spite of all his lies and deceits. He pretends the practice of mental prayer is not for all, but only for such as live in convents or colleges; that it requires wit and learning; and that the exercise of it is very difficult, &c. But all this is nothing but a delusion, it is all imposition and lies. Mental prayer by the way of meditation is very easy, even to the meanest capacities; it requires nothing but a good will, a sincere desire of conversing with God, by thinking of Him

and loving Him. In effect, the great business of mental prayer is *thinking* and *loving;* and who is there that can even live without *thinking* and *loving?* But then, in mental prayer, the *thinking* and *loving* is not confined to such narrow limits or mean objects as the thoughts and affections of worldlings are, which lie always grovelling upon the earth; but it has an immense field open for its entertainment of great and everlasting truths, and such as are both highly moving and of infinite importance to us all; and of great and external goods, together with the way to make them all our own.

As to the difficulty, objected to mental prayer, from the importunity of distractions and the dryness and indevotion that many find therein, it must be allowed that in order to make any progress in this exercise, the Christian must do his part by removing the occasions of these distractions; as well by maintaining a purity of conscience, as by retrenching all inordinate affections to creatures (for where the treasure is, there the heart and thoughts will be), and by restraining the mind at other times from idle and impertinent amusements, and from that continual dissipation of thought in which too many Christians pass their days. But then, for our comfort, when we endeavour to follow these rules, the involuntary distractions, or dryness, which we find in prayer, will not be imputed to us, nor hinder our prayer from being acceptable to God; and, though less pleasant, highly advantageous to ourselves. And what matter is it whether we please ourselves or no, provided we please our God, and do His will? This we may assure ourselves of, that if we continue faithful in attending, as it were, daily upon Him, by this exercise of mental prayer, in spite of all this dryness and opposition of the evil spirit, and of our own weakness and corruption, we shall not fail of coming, sooner or later, to taste of the excellent fruits that ever grow upon this tree of life.

I shall add no more by way of Preface, but only beg of thee resolutely to undertake, and constantly to persevere in this heavenly exercise of mental prayer in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil. What thou art seeking after is a treasure of infinite value; if it cost thee some pains in digging for it, it will abundantly recompense all thy labour. This exercise is the true Christian *philosophy*, consisting in the search and love of *true wisdom;* even that wisdom which is so much extolled by the Spirit of God in Holy Writ, and which comes down from God, and carries us up to God. This is *the science of the saints.*

CONTENTS.

JANUARY

		PAGE
1.	On New Year's Day	1
2.	On beginning a new life with a new year	2
3.	On the rules of a new life	3
4.	On what we are to renounce by the Christian's rule	4
5.	On the lives we are to lead by the Christian s rule	6
6.	On the Epiphany	7
7.	On the Wise Men's journey to Bethlehem	8
8.	On the faith and offerings of the Wise Men	9
9.	On the offerings we are to make by the example of the Wise Men	11
10	On the Gospel of the Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany	12
11.	On seeking Jesus when He has been lost by sin	13
12.	On the lessons our Lord Jesus gives us in His private life	14
13.	On our Saviour's being baptized by St. John the Baptist	15
14.	On the sacred name of Jesus (First Sunday after Epiphany)	17
15.	On our Lord's changing water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana	19
16.	On the necessity of consideration	20
17.	On the consideration of God	21
18.	On consideration of the law of God	23
19.	On the consideration of ourselves	24
20.	On our first beginning	26
21.	On our last end	27
22.	On the titles God has to our service	28
23.	On the happiness of serving God	29
24.	On the vanity of things that keep worldlings from the service of God	31
25.	On the conversion of St. Paul	32
26.	On the evil of mortal sin	34
27.	On the manifold aggravations that are found in mortal sin	35
28.	On the presumption, folly, and madness of the wilful sinner	36
29.	On the havoc sin has made in the world	38
30.	On the havoc sin makes in the soul of a Christian	39
31.	On the judgments of God upon mortal sin	40

FEBRUARY

PAGE

1. On not making light of venial sins 42
2. On Candlemas Day 43
3. On the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, for Septuagesima Sunday 45
4. On the multitude of our sins 47
5. On the goodness of God in waiting for sinners . . . 48
6. On turning from sin to God 50
7. On the sentiments of a penitent sinner 51
8. On doing penance for our sins 52
9. On the manner of doing penance for our sins . . . 54
10. On the parable of the sower (Luke viii.), being the Gospel for Sexagesima Sunday 55
11. On the remaining part of the parable of the sower . . 57
12. Against delay of repentance 58
13. On the folly of deferring our conversion to God . . 60
14. On death-bed performances 61
15. On the dispositions with which we are to enter upon the service of God 63
16. On true devotion 64
17. On the opposition there is between the world and the Gospel, for Shrove-Tide 66
18. On fighting under the standard of Jesus Christ . . . 67
19. On the rules prescribed by Jesus Christ to His followers . 69
24. On the Gospel of the feast of St. Matthias 70

MARCH

17. On St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland 72
19. On St. Joseph 73
25. On the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin 75
On Ash-Wednesday 77
Thursday after Ash-Wednesday. On fasting 78
Friday. On the rules of fasting 79
Saturday. On the great fast of a Christian 80
First Sunday in Lent. On the Fast of Lent 81
Monday. On the ends of the Institution of Lent . . . 82
Tuesday. On the examination of the state of our interior . . 83
Ember-Wednesday. On a further examination of the soul . 85
Thursday. On other sins which we are to inquire into . . 86
Friday. On exercising works of mercy 88
Saturday. On the spiritual works of mercy 89
Second Sunday in Lent. On prayer 90
Monday. On the necessity of prayer 91
Tuesday. On attention in prayer 93
Wednesday. On other conditions of prayer 94
Thursday. On fervour in prayer 95
Friday. On mental prayer 96
Saturday. On the practice of mental prayer 98
Third Sunday in Lent. On devotion to the passion of Christ . 99

PAGE

Monday. On the great advantages of devotion to the passion of Christ 101
Tuesday. On the lessons Christ teaches in His passion . . 102
Wednesday. On other lessons to be learned from Christ in His passion 104
Thursday. On the love that Christ has shown us in His passion 105
Friday. Other considerations to excite in the soul the love of our suffering Jesus 107
Saturday. On the sufferings of our Saviour before His passion . 108
Fourth Sunday in Lent. On our Saviour's prayer in the garden 110
Monday. On our Saviour's agony and bloody sweat . . . 111
Tuesday. On the treason of Judas 113
Wednesday. On the apprehension of our Lord 115
Thursday. On our Lord's being brought before Annas and Caiphas 116
Friday. On our Saviour's treatment in the house of Caiphas . 118
Saturday. On Peter's denial 119
Passion Sunday. On our Lord's being led away to Pilate . . 121
Monday. Our Lord is sent from Pilate to Herod . . . 123
Tuesday. Barabbas is preferred before our Lord. He is scourged at the pillar 124
Wednesday. Our Lord is crowned with thorns 126
Thursday. Our Lord is shown to the people with Ecce Homo, Behold the Man ! 127
Friday. On the part the blessed Virgin bore in her Son's sufferings 129
Saturday. Our Lord is condemned to the cross . . . 131
Palm Sunday. On our Lord's triumphant entrance into Jerusalem 132
Monday in Holy Week. Our Saviour carries His cross . . 134
Tuesday in Holy Week. Our Saviour is nailed to the cross . 136
Wednesday in Holy Week. On the sufferings of our Saviour upon the cross 137
Holy Thursday. On our Saviour's preaching from the cross . 139
Good Friday. On our Saviour's death upon the cross . . 140
Holy Saturday. On our Saviour's burial 142
Easter Day. On the resurrection of our Lord 143
Easter Monday. On the lessons we are to learn from the resurrection of Jesus Christ 145
Easter Tuesday. On our Lord's showing Himself to His disciples after His resurrection 146
Easter Wednesday. On our Lord's showing Himself to the disciples after going to Emmaus (Luke xxiv.) . . . 148
Easter Thursday. On our Lord's manifesting Himself to all the apostles (Luke xxiv., John xx.) 149
Easter Friday. On the peace of a Christian 151
Easter Saturday. On perseverance in good 153
Low Sunday. On the sacrament of baptism 154
Monday after Low Sunday. On the covenant of baptism . . 155
Tuesday. On the ceremonies of baptism 157
Wednesday. On the evil of falling from the grace of baptism . 158
Thursday. On the theological virtues 160
Friday. On faith 161

PAGE
Saturday. On the grounds of faith 163
Second Sunday after Easter. On a lively faith 164
Monday. On divine hope 166
Tuesday. On joining distrust in ourselves with confidence in God 167
Wednesday. On the Lord's Prayer 169
Thursday. On Hallowed be Thy Name 170
Friday. Thy kingdom come 171
Saturday. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven . . 173
Third Sunday after Easter. Give us this day our daily bread . 174
Monday. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us 175
Tuesday. Lead us not into temptation 176
Wednesday. Deliver us from evil 178
Thursday. On morning prayer 179
Friday. On evening prayer 180
Saturday. On praying always 182
Fourth Sunday after Easter. On the great commandment of divine love 183
Monday. On loving the Lord our God above all things . . 184
Tuesday. On loving God with our whole heart . . . 186
Wednesday. On loving God with our whole soul . . . 187
Thursday. On loving God with our whole mind . . . 188
Friday. On loving God with our whole strength . . . 190
Saturday. On returning love for love 191
Rogation Sunday. On the devotion of the time . . . 193
Monday. On the means of attaining the love of God . . 194
Tuesday. On acts of divine love 196
Wednesday. On other exercises of the love of God . . . 197
Ascension Day. On the Ascension of our Lord 199
Friday. On the lessons we are to learn on the Ascension of our Lord 200
Saturday. Other lessons to be learnt from the Ascension of our Lord 202
Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension On the precept of charity to our neighbour 203
Monday. On the excellence of fraternal charity . . . 205
Tuesday. On the exercise of fraternal charity 206
Wednesday. On the different branches of fraternal charity . 208
Thursday the Octave of the Ascension On the great pattern of charity 209
On St. George 210
On St. Philip and St. James 212
On the finding of the cross 213
Friday after the Octave of the Ascension. On preparing the soul for the Holy Ghost 214
Whitsun Eve. On the dispositions necessary for receiving the Holy Ghost 215
Whitsunday. On the coming down of the Holy Ghost . . 217
Whitsun Monday. On the happiness of having the Holy Ghost in the soul 218

PAGE
Whitsun Tuesday. On the gifts of the Holy Ghost . . . 220
Whitsun Wednesday. On the means of keeping the Holy Ghost in the soul 221
Whitsun Thursday. On the marks of the Holy Ghost's abiding in the soul 223
Whitsun Friday. On the sacrament of Confirmation . . 224
Whitsun Saturday. On the obligations of our Confirmation . 226
Trinity Sunday. On the blessed Trinity 227
Monday after Trinity Sunday. On the figure of the blessed Eucharist, and first, of the paschal lamb . . . 229
Tuesday. Of the manna and the bread of Elias . . . 231
Wednesday. Of other figures of the blessed Eucharist . . 232
Corpus Christi Day. On the institution of the blessed Eucharist 234
Friday within the Octave of Corpus Christi. On the mysteries contained in the blessed Eucharist 235
Saturday within the Octave. On the real presence of Jesus Christ in the blessed Eucharist 237
Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi. On Christ's inviting us to this heavenly banquet 238
Monday within the Octave. On the excellent fruits of this divine banquet 240
Tuesday within the Octave. On the dispositions we ought to bring to the Holy Communion 241
Wednesday within the Octave. On devotion before Communion 243
The Octave Day. On devotion after Communion . . . 244

JUNE

14. Of the blessed Eucharist as a sacrifice 246
15. On the excellence of the Eucharistic sacrifice . . . 248
16. On the blessed Eucharist, as a sacrifice of adoration and praise 249
17. On the blessed Eucharist, as a sacrifice of thanksgiving . 251
18. On the blessed Eucharist, as a sacrifice of propitiation . 252
19. On the blessed Eucharist, as a sacrifice of prayer and supplication 253
20. On the devotion with which we are to assist at the sacrifice of the altar 255
21. On spiritual Communion 256
22. On the sacrament of Penance 257
23. On the confession of our sins 259
24. On the nativity of St. John the Baptist 260
25. On the lessons we are to learn from St. John Baptist . 262
26. On the preparation we ought to make for confession . . 263
27. On the motives of repentance 264
28. Other motives of contrition 265
29. On St. Peter and St Paul 267
30. On sincerity in confession 268

JULY

1. On time and eternity 270
2. On the visitation of the Blessed Virgin 271

JULY

PAGE

3. On the good employment of time 273
4. On remembering four last things 275
5. On the certainty of death 276
6. On the uncertainty of the time and manner of our death . 277
7. On preparing for death 278
8. On the sentiments we shall have at the hour of our death . 280
9. On the death of a just man 281
10. On the death of the wicked 282
11. On the condition of the body after death 284
12. On the soul's first entering into another world . . . 285
13. On the particular judgment 286
14. On the examination of the soul in judgment . . . 288
15. On the different states of departed souls before the last day . 289
16. On the sufferings of souls in the middle state . . . 291
17. On the terrors of the last day 292
18. On the general resurrection 294
19. On the coming of the Judge 295
20. On the separation of the good from the bad 296
21. On the opening of the books 298
22. On the conversion of St. Mary Magdalene 299
23. On the last sentence of the good 300
24. On the last sentence of the wicked 302
25. On St. James 303
26. On St. Anne 305
27. On hell 306
28. Some other considerations on hell 308
29. On the prison of hell 309
30. On the entertainment of hell 310
31. On the fire of hell 311

AUGUST

1. On the pain of loss in hell 312
2. On the worm of hell 314
3. On a miserable eternity 315
4. On the happiness of heaven 316
5. On the good things of our Lord, in the land of the living . 317
6. On the transfiguration of our Lord 319
7. On the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem 320
8. On the happy society of the heavenly Jerusalem . . . 321
9. On the eternal enjoyment of God 323
10. On St. Laurence 324
11. On the endowments of the glorified bodies in heaven . . 326
12. On a happy eternity 327
13. On conformity with the will of God 328
14. On the motives that oblige us to perpetual conformity with the will of God 330
15. On the assumption of the Blessed Virgin 331
16. On the Gospel read on the festival of the assumption of the Blessed Virgin (Luke x.) 332

AUGUST

PAGE

17. On resignation to the will of God in all our sufferings . . 334
18. On self-denial 336
19. On mortification of the interior 337
20. On mortification of the passions 339
21. On mortification of the predominant passion . . . 340
22. On mortification of the sensual appetite 341
23. On mortification of curiosity 343
24. On the Gospel for St. Bartholomew (Luke vi. 2, &c.) . . 344
25. On humility 346
26. On the school of humility 347
27. On the Master of whom we are to learn humility . . 349
28. On the fruits of humility 350
29. On other fruits of humility 352
30. On the degrees of humility 353
31. On the practice of humility 354

SEPTEMBER

1. On the eight beatitudes (Matt. v.) 356
2. On poverty of spirit 357
3. On meekness 358
4. On mourning 360
5. On hungering and thirsting after justice 361
6. On being merciful 363
7. On cleanness of heart 364
8. On the nativity of the Blessed Virgin 365
9. On being peacemakers 367
10. On the means of preserving and maintaining the peace of the soul 368
11. On suffering persecution for justice sake 369
12. On the virtue of patience 371
13. On the means of acquiring patience 372
14. On the exaltation of the Cross 374
15. On the presence of God 375
16. On the exercise of the presence of God 377
17. On the advantages of the exercise of the presence of God . 378
18. On the virtue of obedience 380
19. On the fruits of obedience 381
20. On keeping the commandments 383
21. On St. Matthew 385
22. On the worship of God, enjoined by the first commandment 386
23. On the prohibition of idol worship 388
24. On honouring God's holy name 389
25. On keeping holy the Lord's day 391
26. Honour thy father and thy mother 393
27. Thou shalt not kill 394
28. On spiritual murder 396
29. On Michaelmas day 397
30. Thou shalt not commit adultery 399

OCTOBER

		PAGE
1.	Thou shalt not steal	400
2.	On our guardian angels	402
3.	Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour	404
4.	On rash judgment	405
5.	On avoiding all manner of lies	407
6.	Thou shalt not covet	408
7.	On the precepts of the Church	410
8.	On the vice of pride	411
9.	On the malignity of pride	413
10.	Remedies against pride	414
11.	Other prescriptions against pride	415
12.	On vainglory	417
13.	Prescriptions against vainglory	419
14.	On the vice of covetousness	420
15.	Prescriptions against covetousness, out of holy writ	422
16.	On the vice of impurity	424
17.	Prescriptions against impurity	425
18.	On the virtue of chastity	427
19.	On the vice of anger	428
20.	Remedies against the vice of anger	430
21.	On the vice of intemperance	431
22.	Prescriptions against intemperance	433
23.	On the vice of envy	434
24.	Remedies against envy	436
25.	On the vice of spiritual sloth	437
26.	On the remedies against spiritual sloth	439
27.	On the Christian's warfare	440
28.	On St. Simon and St. Jude	442
29.	On the Christian's armour	444
30.	On the Christian conflict	445
31.	On the four cardinal virtues	447

NOVEMBER

1.	On the feast of All Saints	448
2.	On the commemoration of all souls	450
3.	On the obligation of Christians to be saints	452
4.	On the means we all have to become saints	454
5.	On the perfection of our ordinary actions	455
6.	On the sanctity of the Christian's institute	457
7.	On following the light of Christ	459
8.	One thing is necessary (Luke x. 42)	460
9.	Strive to enter by the narrow gate (Luke xiii. 24)	462
10.	No man can serve two masters (Matt. vi. 24)	463
11.	He that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple (Luke xiv. 33)	465
12.	If any man will come after me, let him deny himself (Matt. xvi. 24)	466
13.	Except your justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees,	

NOVEMBER

PAGE

you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven, (Matt. v. 20) 468
14. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure, &c. (Matt. xiii. 44) 470
15. On the parable of the marriage feast (Matt. xxii.) . . . 471
16. On the parable of the barren fig tree (Luke xiii.) . . 473
17. On the parable of the prodigal son (Luke xv.) . . . 475
18. On the parable of the unjust steward (Luke xvi.) . . 477
19. On the rich man and the beggar (Luke xvi.) . . . 479
20. On the good Samaritan (Luke x.) 480
21. On the presentation of the Blessed Virgin 482
22. On the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke xviii.) . . . 484
23. On the parable of the grain of mustard seed (Matt. xiii.) . 485
24. On the parable of the ten virgins (Mat. xxv.) . . . 487
25. On the parable of the talents (Matt. xxv.) 489
26. On the parable of the vineyard let out to husbandmen, (Matt. xxi.) 491
27. On the merciful dealings of Christ our Lord with sinners . 493
28. On the conversion of Zaccheus (Luke xix.) 494
29. On Christ weeping over Jerusalem (Luke xix.) . . . 496
30. On St. Andrew 498

DECEMBER

1. Of the time of Advent 500
2. On what we must do to prepare the way of the Lord . . 501
3. On the miracles of Christ our Lord 503
4. On our Lord cleansing the lepers 505
5. On our Lord stilling the storm at sea; and feeding the multitudes 507
6. On the lessons that are to be learnt from other miracles of our Lord 509
7. On our Lord giving sight to the blind, and raising the dead to life 510
8. On the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin . . 512
9. On the purity with which we are to prepare our souls for Christ 514
10. On purifying the interior powers of the soul 516
11. On the purity of our actions 517
12. On the angelic salutation 519
13. On the wonders of God in the Incarnation of His Son . . 521
14. On the glory of God in the Incarnation of His Son . . 523
15. On the glory the Son of God gave His Father in His mother's womb 525
16. On the charity of the Son of God for us, in His mother's womb 526
17. On the benefits the Son of God brings us by His Incarnation 528
18. On other benefits of our Saviour to mankind, by His Incarnation 530
19. On our Saviour as our king and our priest 532

DECEMBER

PAGE

20. On our Saviour as our Sacrifice 534
21. On St. Thomas the Apostle 536
22. On the Ember week in Advent 538
33. On preparation for the birth of Christ 540
24. On the birth of Christ 541
25. On Christmas Day 543
26. On St. Stephen 545
27. On St. John the Apostle and Evangelist 547
28. On the holy Innocents 548
29. On the Gospel of the good shepherd (John x.), read for St. Thomas of Canterbury 550
30. On the conclusion of the year 552
31. On the Gospel read for St. Silvester (Luke xii. 35, &c.) . 553

MEDITATIONS.

JANUARY 1.

On New Year's Day.

1. CONSIDER that on this day we keep the Octave of the birth of Christ, together with the feast of His circumcision. When but eight days old, He began to shed His sacred blood in obedience to His Father's will; subjecting Himself to that most painful and humbling ceremony, and bearing therein the resemblance of a criminal, as if He, like the rest of men, had stood in need of circumcision for the expiation of sin. Christians, learn from your infant Saviour the lessons He desires to teach you in His circumcision; His unparalleled humility, perfect obedience and conformity to His Father's will; His patience in suffering, and His ardent love and charity for us. He came to discharge the immense debt we owe by our sins to His Father's justice, by shedding the last drop of His blood in expiation of them; and, behold, He has given us an earnest of this payment, by submitting Himself this day to the knife of circumcision.

2. Consider and set before your eyes this divine infant, this innocent Lamb of God, this beloved of your souls, beautiful beyond the children of men, imbrued in His own most sacred blood; and suffering in that tender age the cruel smart of a most sensible wound. How sensible indeed to Him! How sensible to the loving heart of His blessed Virgin Mother! See with what affection she embraces Him, with what anguish of heart she bewails His sufferings, with what tender compassion she strives to afford Him all the comfort she is able! Learn of her the like affections of love and compassion for your suffering Lord. Embrace, with her, thy infant Saviour, bleeding for thee. "A bloody spouse thou art to me," said Sephora to Moses (Exod. iv. 25); when, to deliver him from the hand of the angel who threatened him with death, she touched his feet with the blood of her child whom she had just circumcised. How truly is our dear Redeemer a sponsus sanguinum, a bloody spouse to our souls, for whom He gives now this first-fruit, and for whom He will one day give all

His blood, to rescue us from the hand of the destroying angel! Blessed be His divine charity for ever!

3. Consider that it is the duty of all Christians to imitate our Lord's circumcision, by a spiritual circumcision of the heart, which God so often calls for in the Scriptures, and always preferred before the carnal circumcision. This spiritual circumcision requires of us a cutting off, or retrenching, all disorderly affections to the world and its pomps; to the mammon of iniquity, to the flesh and its lusts; and serious application of our souls to the daily mortification of our passions and corrupt inclinations. My soul, let us heartily embrace, and daily put in practice, this circumcision of the heart.

Conclusion. Make a return of thy heart to thy infant Saviour, who began on this day to shed His blood for thee; but see it be a heart purified, by spiritual circumcision, from all such affections as are disagreeable to Him.

JANUARY 2.

On beginning a new life with a new year.

1. Consider how many years of your life are now past and gone; how long it is since you first came to the knowledge of good and evil; and in what manner you have spent all this precious time, given you for no other end but that you might employ it in the love and service of your God, and in securing the salvation of your immortal soul. Alas! have any of these past years been spent in such a manner as to answer this great end? Is not that one and only business for which you came into the world still to be begun? Have not all these years, which one after another have flowed away into the gulf of eternity, been utterly lost to your soul? It is well if they have not; considering how soon the greater part of Christians, after coming to the use of reason, fall from the grace of their baptism; how quickly they give themselves up to follow the bent of their corrupt inclinations and passions; and in what forgetfulness of God they generally pass their days. Ah! my soul, what a sad thought it would be, if during the years thou hast hitherto lived, instead of storing up provision for a happy eternity, thou hast been only "treasuring up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath"!

2. Consider the present state and condition of your conscience. What is your life at present? How stand accounts between your soul and God? What would you think, if this day you were to be called to the bar of divine justice? Would you not earnestly desire a delay? Alas! how few live in the manner in which they would be glad to be found when death shall overtake them! And yet they are not ignorant that death comes generally when least expected, and that, generally speaking, as men live, so they die.

Deceive not thyself, nor suffer thyself to be imposed upon by the enemy. Thy time will be much shorter than thou art willing to think; this very year, perhaps, may be thy last; it will certainly be so to thousands, who expect it as little as thyself. Set, then, thy house in order now; begin this very day to rectify the state of thy interior, and live henceforward as thou desirest to die. There cannot be too great security where eternity is at stake.

3. Consider that the mercy of God has borne with you for so many years past, and notwithstanding the provocations of your repeated crimes and ingratitude, has brought you to the beginning of this new year, out of a sincere desire that now, at least, you may begin a new life, and such a life as will secure to your soul that true life which never ends. You have been, alas! like the barren "fig-tree, planted in His vineyard," which hitherto has brought forth nothing but leaves; but He is willing to try once more, in hopes of your doing better for the future. But take care to disappoint Him no more, by refusing Him the fruit He expects of a thorough amendment of life, lest He pass an irrevocable sentence for the barren tree to be cut down and cast into the fire.

Conclusion. Begin, from this very hour, to turn away from sin, and to dedicate yourself henceforward in good earnest to the love and service of God. Alas! how few Christians seem to be truly in earnest in this greatest of all concerns, where their all is at stake for eternity.

JANUARY 3.

On the rules of a new life.

1. Consider that in the epistle read on New Year's Day (Titus ii. 11–15), the Apostle has in few words declared to us the rules we are to follow in our lives, in consequence of the Son of God coming amongst us: viz., what we are to renounce; what we are to practise; what we are to look for; and what we are to attend to. "The grace of God our Saviour," saith he, "hath appeared to all men; instructing us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world; looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works!" How many lessons are here contained in a few words! Let us reflect on them one after another.

2. Consider, therefore, the end for which our God and Saviour came amongst us by the mystery of His incarnation—to enlighten us by His Gospel and His life; and at length offer to Himself in

sacrifice for us, by His death upon the cross. "He gave Himself for us," saith the Apostle, "that He might redeem us from all iniquity:" by setting us at liberty from being slaves to Satan, sin, and hell; by breaking asunder the chains of our vices and passions; and by purchasing mercy, grace, and salvation for us; to the end that, by the virtue of His precious blood, "He might cleanse us for Himself," and make us "an acceptable people," "a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pet. ii. 9), a zealous "pursuer of all good works." See, Christians, what kind of men we ought to be, in consequence of what the Son of God has done in coming down from heaven and laying down His life for us. Let us never more degenerate by leading lives unworthy of Him! Let us never return to our former slavery!

3. Consider that, being purchased by the Son of God at so great a price, we are to consider ourselves henceforward as His property; and therefore must not pretend to dispose of ourselves any otherwise than according to His will and pleasure. This ought to be our rule in all we do; this we ought to consult in all our deliberations; this holy will of Him who has bought us with His own blood should be in everything a law to us, so as to make us renounce all that we know to be displeasing to Him; and ever to pursue with all our strength what we know to be agreeable to Him. "You are not your own, for you are bought with a great price," says the Apostle (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). "Glorify and bear God in your body."

Conclusion. Take in practice for the rule of your life this holy will of our Redeemer, and according to the full extent of the Apostle's exposition and declaration of the Christian's rule (Titus ii. 11, &c.), and you will be religious men indeed, of that excellent order which Jesus Christ came from heaven to institute, and you will be with Him for ever.

JANUARY 4.

On what we are to renounce by the Christian's rule.

1. Consider that, in consequence of our redemption through Jesus Christ, we are bound, by the tenor of the rule above rehearsed, to deny, that is, to renounce, all "ungodliness and worldly desires," and to be "clean from all iniquity;" we are to run away from all evil, more especially from the evils here named, the first of which is ungodliness, which is usually the first crime we commit and the source of all the rest. For by ungodliness we understand, either taking away from God what belongs to Him, or refusing Him the service and love we owe Him. Now, here the sinner usually begins to revolt. He is indispensably obliged to dedicate himself to God from his first coming to the use of reason; instead of which, like the apostate

angels, he turns himself away from Him, he refuses Him his heart, which He so justly claims, and gives it to empty toys and lying follies. This is ungodliness; this is a kind of idolatry, in preferring the creature before the Creator; this is the source of innumerable evils, the very bane of the world. Let us renounce and detest it!

2. Consider what those baits are which Satan usually employs to draw us away from God; for no man ever chooses to serve the devil for his own sake, or for any love he has for him; but the tempter sets before us the deceitful appearance of some worldly honour, profit, or pleasure, and with these he allures deluded mortals to his service; these are the gilded pills with which he poisons the soul: these are his treacherous baits, that hide the hook with which he draws millions into hell. Therefore the Christian's rule requires that, together with ungodliness, he should also deny all worldly desires, that is, all affection to worldly toys and cheating vanities, as the most effectual means of disarming Satan, and hindering him from having any hold of us. For when we despise all he can offer, and even fly from and abhor his choicest allurements, he stands confounded, and can do no more.

3. Consider that these worldly lusts and desires which the Christian must renounce, are, in particular, those of which the beloved disciple writes, 1 John ii. 15, 16. "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father" (the love of God) "is not in him; for all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life." It is on account of this triple concupiscence, which reigns in all places, that the whole world, as the same apostle tells us (v. 19), "is seated in wickedness;" so that, if we desire to belong to Christ in good earnest, and to profess ourselves religious under this rule, we must declare perpetual war against this triple concupiscence, and its abettors, viz., the world and our corrupt nature; and then we may despise all the devils in hell. Yes, Christians, renounce these three capital enemies of your souls, viz., the love of sensual pleasures, the love of gratifying the covetous eye with worldly toys, and the love of worldly honour, and you shall be "cleansed from all iniquity."

Conclusion. Be ever zealous observers of your rule, by "denying ungodliness and worldly desires;" and turn your heart to seek happiness in other kinds of honours, riches, and pleasures such as the world cannot give, and which may stay with you for ever.

JANUARY 5.

On the lives we are to lead by the Christian's rule.

1. Consider that, by the rule above rehearsed, we are not only to decline from evil, in consequence of our God and Saviour coming amongst us, but are also to do good. We are not only to "deny ungodliness and worldly desires," but also to "live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world," that we may walk worthy of Him who has "given Himself for us," not only that He "might redeem us from all iniquity," but also that He might "cleanse us for Himself," and make us "an acceptable people, a pursuer of good works." The Christian's duty, by this rule of life, has three branches—one of them relates to regulating himself; another regards his neighbour; but the third, and chiefest of all, relates to God. All these we comply with, if we "live soberly, and justly, and godly," because by living soberly we keep ourselves in perfect order; by living justly, we behave ourselves to our neighbour in all things as we ought; and by living godly, we dedicate our whole lives to God.

2. Consider the extent of these three branches of the Christian's duty, and how much this sobriety, justice, and godliness require of us. Christian sobriety not only excludes intemperance in eating and drinking, but all other excesses and disorders that may in any way carry us out of the bounds of strict regularity; so that to be truly sober, we must restrain pride by humility, anger by meekness, lust by purity, and the irregular motions of our passions and disorderly inclinations, by such general temperance and moderation, as may maintain the whole man in due decorum, both as to soul and body. And this Christian sobriety keeps us, as to ourselves in perfect order, harmony, and peace. Christian justice regulates our conduct as to our neighbour by that golden rule of "doing as we would be done by;" and in consequence of this excludes every thought, judgment, or censure, every word or discourse, every action or dealing, that may tend to his prejudice or disadvantage; and by this means, as much as lies in us, we maintain due order, harmony, and peace with our neighbour. And lastly, true godliness makes us seek God in all things and above all things, and consecrates our powers and faculties to His love and service, by means of recollection, meditation, and continual prayer; and we maintain a perpetual peace with God. So that complying with these three branches of our duty makes us truly wise and truly perfect, and establishes the peace of God in our souls.

3. Consider that, according to the words of the Apostle, in the place above quoted, whilst we labour to comply with the excellent rule of Christ our Lord by "living soberly, justly, and godly in

this world," we must not confine our views to the narrow limits of this short life here below; but must be ever looking forward towards the great object of the Christian's hope, viz., the blessed and glorious coming of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, when He shall come to accomplish the great work He has begun in us, and to take us home with Him, both soul and body, to our true country, His eternal kingdom. How happy are those souls that are always aspiring after this coming of their Lord, and bewailing, in the meantime, the continuance of their banishment, and their distance from Him, in this foreign land!

Conclusion. Begin with the new year to enter upon the true path of life, by sobriety, justice, and godliness; and strive to advance daily, by large steps, in this happy way which leads to that life which never ends.

JANUARY 6.

On the Epiphany.

1. Consider that this day is kept by the Church of God with great solemnity, as one of the principal festivals of the year; and is called the Epiphany, that is to say, the apparition or manifestation of our Lord, because on this day He was first made known to the Gentiles, viz., to the wise men of the east, who were brought to Him by the apparition of an extraordinary star, and inspired to pay their homage and worship to Him. How just it is that we should all celebrate with grateful devotion this day of our first calling to the knowledge and faith of Christ—this Christmas Day of the Gentiles! My soul, how great is the benefit of thy vocation to the true Christian faith! What would all other favours or advantages, either of nature or grace, have availed thee if this had been wanting? How miserable must thou have been, both for time and eternity, if, like millions of others, thou hadst been left to "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death"! Bless Him, then, both now and for ever, who, without any desert on thy part, has brought thee to this admirable light!

2. Consider the wonderful ways of Divine Providence, as well in preparing both Jews and Gentiles to expect about that time the coming of the Messiah, as in giving early notice of His birth to both—to the Jews, by an angel sent to the shepherds; to the Gentiles, by a star that appeared to the wise men of the east. But, alas! how few, either of the one or the other, duly corresponded with this great call! And is not this the case with millions to this day, who, though many ways called and invited by, and to, that "light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world" (John i.), choose rather to remain in the darkness of infidelity, error, or vice, than to follow the conduct of that star that would bring them to the true light? How clearly shall we

see one day that there was nothing wanting on the part of Divine Providence to bring us all to Himself, but that we have been generally so unhappy as to be wanting in correspondence with His lights and calls.

3. Consider that this star, which gave notice of the birth of our Saviour, was seen by all the nations of the east; but that they contented themselves with gazing upon it, without taking any pains to seek Him whom that star pointed out to them; whilst the wise men, following this divine call, set out without delay in quest of the new-born King; in consequence of which they were happily brought to Christ and to His admirable light, whilst the others remained in darkness and died in their infidelity. See the difference between a ready compliance with the inspirations and graces of God, and the neglect of these heavenly calls: a difference which, as it produces here the distinction of the saint and the sinner, so will terminate hereafter in a happy eternity for such as follow God and His calls, and a miserable eternity for such as neglect them. Ah! sinners, dread the consequences of neglecting the calls of Heaven! God will not be mocked.

Conclusion. Be ever attentive to those gracious lights and inspirations by which you are invited to leave the ways of iniquity and to follow Christ. Alas! how many of these stars have you hitherto neglected? Arise now, at least, and set out by the guidance of this divine light, that you may make the best of your way home to your Father's house. It is not yet too late.

JANUARY 7.

On the Wise Men's Journey to Bethlehem.

1. Consider that the wise men were no sooner informed, by the apparition of this extraordinary star, of the birth of the great King who was to rule the world, but they set out to seek Him in Judea, where they understood, by an ancient tradition and by the prophecy of Balaam (Num. xxiv. 17), that He who was denoted by that star should be born. And as it was natural for them to expect to hear news of Him in Jerusalem, the capital of Judea, they went thither to inquire after Him. "Where is He," say they (Matt. ii. 2), "who is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to adore Him." But as "His kingdom was not of this world," but was to be established upon other kinds of foundations than any mortal empire—in the immortal souls of His people, and upon the ruins of worldly pride, and of the pomps of Satan—He choose for His birth the humble stable of Bethlehem, before any of the stately palaces of Jerusalem, as being more agreeable to His kingdom, the kingdom of humility and truth. How happy are those souls whose eyes are always open to this heavenly truth, and shut to worldly vanity

and lies! How happy they, who, by conforming in practice to the maxims of this great King, become themselves His kingdom, even that kingdom in which He shall reign for ever!

2. Consider how King Herod was troubled at hearing of the birth of this new King, and so was all Jerusalem with him; in which we may see a figure of such souls as are so wedded to this cheating world and its lusts, as to be more afraid of parting with them than of losing an eternal kingdom; and therefore are troubled and disturbed when summoned by the messenger of heaven to arise, and leave these toys, to go and seek after Christ; and they even strive to kill the heavenly infant who would gladly be born in their souls, by smothering those lights and graces that offer to conduct them to Him. How happy were the dispositions of the wise men, who were willing at any cost to find Christ; and who gladly sought and followed the directions of those who by their office were qualified to point Him out to them! But, alas! how miserable were those priests and scribes who, whilst they directed the wise men to our Saviour, took no pains to seek Him themselves. See, my soul, this never be thy case.

3. Consider how the wise men, in their way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, were again favoured with the sight of the star, which conducted them to Bethlehem, and pointed out to them the place where our Saviour was. This heavenly light filled their hearts with "exceeding great joy;" and going in, they found Him whom their souls desired, and they paid their homage to Him. How precious, how lovely, how desirable is the light that conducts the soul to Christ! What joy, what delight to the soul to see herself draw near to God, her sovereign good! But this heavenly light is not usually given but to those who fight and conquer the labours, difficulties, and opposition they meet with on the way to Christ, and who, like the wise men, are in earnest in seeking Him. Happy they who follow this example! Happy they who taste and see how sweet the Lord is to those who seek and find Him!

Conclusion. Imitate the wise men, first, in their ready compliance with the divine call: 2dly, in their diligence in inquiring after Christ; and 3dly, in their perseverance; and then you may confidently expect, like them, to find your Lord, and to rejoice in Him.

JANUARY 8.

On the faith and offerings of the Wise Men.

1. Consider the strong and lively faith of the wise men. They set out with expectation of finding an infant king, attended with that state and pomp which was suitable to the dignity of one who was born to be monarch of the universe; and behold, instead of this, they meet with nothing but poverty and humility; a babe wrapt

in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger; attended only by a poor maid, and a humble tradesman, an ox, and an ass. But their faith, by this time, was more fully instructed in the qualities of Him whom they had been seeking with so much labour: and therefore they were not shocked by those mean appearances, nor looked upon them with a worldly eye; but, under this poor and humble equipage, believed in and adored their King, their God, and their Saviour. How happy are those souls whose faith takes no scandal either at the crib or the cross of Christ, but rather knits them so much the more closely to Him, by how much the more He has debased Himself for the love of them!

2. Consider how the wise men, having found our Lord, immediately fell prostrate before Him, and worshipped Him; professing, by this humble and submissive posture of the body, the profound reverence and adoration of their souls. Do we imitate them by the like humility, reverence, and adoration, when we appear before the same Lord in prayer? After this homage they opened their treasures and made Him offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh—to signify, by the quality of these gifts, their faith in Him to whom they gave them. They presented Him with gold, as a tribute due to Him as their King; they offered Him frankincense (which was used in the divine worship), as to their God; and they gave Him myrrh (which was used in the burial of the dead), as to a mortal man who came to redeem mankind by His death. Let us, by their example, daily offer Him our best homage in all these qualities; as our King, our God, and our Redeemer.

3. Consider that the wise men, having found Christ, were admonished from Heaven to return no more to Herod, and so went back another way to their own country: to teach us that, after finding Christ, we must return no more to His and our enemies, Satan and sin, but must make the best of our way to our true country by a different road from that by which we came away from it. Our true country is Paradise; we came away from it by pride, disobedience, the love of visible things, and by gratifying our sensual appetite with forbidden fruit. We must take another road if we hope to return thither; it must be by penitential tears, by humility, by despising visible things; by restraining our sensual appetite, by wholesome mortification of the flesh and other self-denials, and by constant obedience, that we are to find the way back to our true home.

Conclusion. Quit the broad road of gratifying thy passions and sensual pleasures, and pass over to the narrow way of penance and self-denial, and thou shalt be brought safely back to thy true country and to thy Father's house.

JANUARY 9.

Of the offerings we are to make, by the example of the Wise Men.

1. Consider that the gold, frankincense, and myrrh, offered by the wise men to our new-born Saviour, mystically denote other offerings, which we ought daily to make Him. In the first place, we must offer Him the tribute of gold, as our true King; that is, we must daily present Him with our souls, stamped with His own image, and burnished with divine love. This is the gold, this is the tribute our Sovereign expects from us. When the Jews asked Him concerning their giving tribute to Cæsar, He called for the coin, on which they had the image of Cæsar, and inferred from thence that they were "to render to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's" (Matt. xxii.); that is, to give him what was stamped with his image. Our souls are stamped with God's image, to the end that we should give them in tribute to Him by perfect love; "render then to God the things that are God's," by daily offering your soul to Him by fervent acts of love, and you will give Him gold.

2. Consider that we must also offer frankincense to our Saviour as our God. This in Scripture is an emblem of prayer, and expresses the worship we pay our Lord, by sending up to Him the odoriferous vapour of devotion, as from the censer of a heart burning with the love of God. Prayer, then, is the frankincense which we must, in imitation of the wise men, present to our Saviour as our God. This we must daily offer Him at the hours of incense, as a morning and evening sacrifice in the temple of God, which is within our souls; with this we ought also to endeavour to perfume in some measure all our daily actions and employments, in order to make them agreeable to Him.

3. Consider that with these offerings of the gold of divine love, and of the frankincense of fervent prayer, we must join that of the myrrh of self-denial and mortification, which our Lord no less expects at our hands than the other two; since He has expressly declared that except we "deny ourselves" and "hate ourselves" in this world, we cannot be His disciples. Myrrh has a bitter taste, but it is a wholesome bitter; and it has the property of keeping bodies from corruption. Thus it is an emblem of the mortification of our passions and sensual inclinations; which is bitter and disagreeable indeed to human nature, but is sovereignly wholesome and necessary to keep the soul from the corruption of sin. So that this offering of myrrh, like the other two, should be the daily exercise of a Christian; and should, as it were, season all his thoughts, words, and deeds, to restrain them from evil.

Conclusion. Let not a day pass without frequently offering to thy Lord the gold of love and charity, the frankincense of prayer, and the myrrh of self-denial; and He will certainly accept both of thy offerings and thyself, and in exchange will give thee Himself.

JANUARY 10.

On the Gospel of the Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany.

1. Consider how Jesus, Mary, and Joseph went every year up to Jerusalem, to the temple of God, upon the solemn festivals, notwithstanding their poverty and their living at the distance of three days' journey from Jerusalem. There they employed the weeks appointed for the feast in assisting at the public worship, praises, and sacrifices which, at those times, were offered to God in the temple. Christians, learn from this example the diligence with which you ought to assist at the public worship of God upon festivals. Learn not to suffer every trifling difficulty to hinder your attendance in God's temple on those days, when neither the length nor the difficulties either of the journey, or of the stay they were to make in Jerusalem, could keep this holy family from the constant observance of these times dedicated to God. But who can conceive the dispositions of soul with which they entered upon these journeys; their recollection on the road, their heavenly conversation in Jerusalem, their profound adoration, their inflamed love, their fervent prayer and devotion in the temple! Let us strive to imitate them.

2. Consider how when Jesus was twelve years old, and they had gone up, according to their custom, to keep the solemn Feast of the Pasch in Jerusalem, after the days of the solemnity were fulfilled—when they returned, our Saviour withdrew Himself from them and stayed behind in the city. They, innocently thinking Him to be in the company, went one day's journey homewards without Him, and then not finding Him, were struck with unspeakable grief and concern for their loss: the more so because they apprehended, lest by some fault of theirs, they had driven Him away from them. What anguish must it be to a soul, that is sensible of the treasure she possesses when Jesus is with her, to find that He has withdrawn Himself from her, that she has lost her treasure! But how much more must this blessed couple have regretted the loss of Jesus; their love for Him being much greater than can be expressed or imagined! For in proportion to their love, their sorrow must have been great beyond expression. Learn hence, my soul, what value thou oughtest to set upon the happiness of having Jesus with thee; and how much thou oughtest to regret the loss of Him.

3. Consider that although the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph had lost Jesus as to His sensible presence, yet they had not

lost Him as to the presence of His grace and love; they had Him still very near to them, because they had Him in their hearts. A lesson for Christians of goodwill, not to be discouraged, nor to give themselves up to excessive anguish, if sometimes they experience the like subtraction of the sensible presence of our Lord, by dryness in their devotions, and spiritual desolation; let them but take care to keep their heart and will with Him, and they may be assured He is not far from them. He has often dealt thus with the greatest saints—and to their advantage too—to keep them humble and distrustful of themselves; and to teach them not to seek their own satisfaction in the milk of spiritual consolations, but to be content to feed their souls with the more solid diet of conformity to the will of God and the cross of Christ.

Conclusion. Take care not to drive away Jesus by wilful sin; and be assured that nothing else can ever separate Him from thee.

JANUARY 11.

On seeking Jesus, when He has been lost by sin.

1. Consider how great an evil it is to lose Jesus by wilful sin. It is a far greater loss than if we should lose our all. This loss is the greatest misery that can befall a soul on this side of eternity—it wants nothing but eternity to make it hell. And yet how common is this loss? How often is Jesus lost in this manner, even in our most solemn festivals, by the abuse of these holy times? And how is it possible that a Christian soul should feel any comfort, joy, or pleasure under so great a loss? What then must they do, who have reason to apprehend they have thus lost their Jesus; that He is now no longer theirs, and they no longer His! They must learn from the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph how they are to seek and find Him again; for though this blessed couple had not lost Him in that wretched way, yet the manner in which they sought Him may be instructive to others, to teach them by what means Jesus may be found again when He is lost.

2. Consider that the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph were no sooner aware they had lost Jesus, but they began to seek Him without delay, and gave themselves no rest till they had found Him: to teach us, that there ought to be no delay in seeking Him as soon as we perceive we have lost Him, and how much we ought to regret so sad a loss. They made no stay in the place where they were, but hastened back to Jerusalem, to seek Him; not enduring to remain for ever so short a time at a distance from Him: to teach us to spare no pains, either night or day, in seeking Him, and in using all means in our power to find Him. They sought Him sorrowing, that is, with their souls full of grief and anguish, through the sense they had of the loss of their beloved:

to teach us that the true way of finding Jesus when lost must be by sorrow joined with love, that is, by a contrite and humble heart. They sought Him with perseverance, and did not give over their search till they had found Him: to teach us not to desist, on meeting with difficulties and opposition, in our search after Jesus, but to go on with diligence till we recover His gracious company.

3. Consider that Jesus was not found by the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph amongst their kindred and acquaintance. Alas! He is too often lost in the company and conversation of our worldly friends; and is seldom to be found there. The common conversation of the world is at best empty, worldly, and distracting; and it is out of fashion to speak or think of Jesus in the company of worldlings. Therefore the soul that would effectually find Him, must withdraw as much as may be from worldly company and enter into a kind of spiritual retreat; she must make the best of her way by spiritual reading, meditation, and prayer, to the temple of God in Jerusalem; or rather she must make a temple for Jesus within her own self, and seek Him there by recollection. This is the surest place to find Him. Sinners, return to your own hearts, and you will quickly find your God. When you went astray from Him, you went astray also from your own hearts and your inward house; you forgot at the same time both God and yourselves. Return home to your interior, and you shall recover both again.

Conclusion. If at any time you have reason to apprehend that you have lost Jesus, withdraw immediately from the crowd, to seek Him in His temple in your own interior, and give yourselves no rest till you have found Him there. There He will hear you, and will teach you.

JANUARY 12.

On the lessons our Lord Jesus gives us in His private life.

1. Consider the words spoken by our Lord Jesus to His parents, when they found Him in the temple, in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions (Luke ii.). "Did you not know," said He, "that I must be about My Father's business? I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John v. 30). This was His daily food during His mortal life. "My meat," said He, "is to do the will of Him that sent Me" (John iv. 34). This was the exercise of His private life, which He spent in obscurity and retirement under a poor carpenter's roof. He was all the while about the business of His Father. He was ever doing His will. All His thoughts, words, and actions were directed to His Father's glory. And this is the great lesson we are to learn from Him in His private life. We all of us, like Him, came into this world for nothing else but to do

the will of God; we all of us ought to be ever about the business of our Heavenly Father; all our thoughts, words, and actions ought to be directed to Him. Let us study well this great lesson, which the Son of God employed so many years in teaching.

2. Consider how "He went down with Joseph and Mary to Nazareth, and was subject to them" (Luke ii. 51). Stand astonished, my soul, to see the Lord and Maker of heaven and earth submitting Himself to His creatures! See how He serves them even in the meanest offices; how He works with His reputed father at his mechanical trade. But with what modesty and silence, with what recollection and application of soul to His Heavenly Father by continual adoration, thanksgiving, oblation, and love, and by continual prayer and intercession for us! Christians, learn from this great example to be ever humble, meek, and obedient. Learn to sanctify your ordinary employments and actions by recollection and mental prayer. Learn that even the highest perfection may be found in the exercise of the lowest and meanest offices, if in these the soul but takes care to keep close to her God, and to embrace Him by love.

3. Consider what is written of our Lord with relation to this part of His life; that "Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men" (Luke ii. 52). Our Lord, who from the first moment of His conception was full of heavenly wisdom and divine grace, was pleased, in proportion to His advancing in age, to show forth every day more and more, in His words and actions, the admirable treasures of wisdom and grace that were hidden in His soul: to teach us to make continual progress in the way to God; and to advance every day by large steps, from virtue to virtue, till we come "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13). Christians, do we seriously apply ourselves to learn this excellent lesson? What progress have we hitherto made, after so many years pretending to walk after Jesus Christ in the way of virtue? Have we not for the most part rather gone backward than forward? Let us now, at least, begin to be in earnest.

Conclusion. Learn of our Saviour those lessons which He desires to teach us in His private life, particularly these three:—1. To be ever about the business of our Father; 2. To be ever submissive and obedient to His vicegerents; and 3. To be ever making the best of our way to Him.

JANUARY 13.

On our Saviour's being baptized by St. John the Baptist.

1. Consider how St. John the Baptist, being sent as forerunner of our Lord, to prepare the people for Him, by preaching to them penance, and a thorough conversion from their sins; when a

multitude of publicans and sinners resorted to him, and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins, and receiving from him the rules of a new life; our Lord Jesus also came among them (as if He had stood in need of that baptism of penance for the remission of sins) and desired to be baptized by him. Admire the humility of this "Lamb of God," who came "to take away the sins of the world," and yet here associates Himself with sinners, and is willing to pass for one of them. The Baptist was astonished at it, and refused to baptize Him, saying, "I ought to be baptized by Thee, and comest Thou to me?" But Jesus insisted upon his doing so; "For so it becometh us," said He, "to fulfil all justice" (Matt. iii. 14, 15); that is, to exercise and to give examples of all virtues; amongst which humility is the foundation which sustains the rest. Give us Thy grace, dear Lord, that we also may "fulfil all justice," by imitation of Thy humility.

2. Consider how our Lord Jesus, having thus humbled Himself to "fulfil all justice," was presently "exalted" by His Heavenly Father; when "being baptized and praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, as a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased (Luke iii. 21, 22). Learn hence, my soul, that humility opens heaven and conducts us to God. But see also, how upon this occasion of the baptism of Christ, the chief mysteries of religion are displayed, how the whole Blessed Trinity manifests Itself: the Father, by His voice from heaven; the Son, in His human nature assumed for us; and the Holy Ghost descending in the shape of a dove. See how the mission and Gospel of Jesus Christ is solemnly authorised with a formal declaration of the dignity of His person, and of His unction and consecration, by the Spirit of God; see how the Son of God, descending into the waters, sanctifies them, in order to those great effects of regeneration and renovation of the soul in the laver of baptism; see how He buries, as it were, the old Adam under the waters, and brings Him forth a new man; opening heaven in His favour, and imparting to Him both His Holy Spirit and the title and dignity of Son of God. Let us venerate these heavenly mysteries! Let us embrace our humble Saviour, the source of all our good.

3. Consider how our Lord began His mission, and the preaching of His Gospel, from this time of His being baptized, solemnly recommended to the world, not only by the testimony of St. John Baptist, but by the voice of His Heavenly Father, and the visible descent of the Holy Ghost. But, first, for our instruction, He was pleased, by way of preparation, to withdraw Himself from the conversation of men into a lonesome wilderness, and there to employ forty days in fasting and prayer; at the end of which time He suffered three different assaults of temptation from Satan; and after overcoming this wicked enemy, was visited and served by angels. Christians, let us learn from this example, in all our

spiritual undertakings, to seek first the assistance and blessing of heaven, by retirement, fasting, and prayer; let us learn that these are the best arms against all the temptations of the enemy; that we are not to expect, how much soever we are retired from the world, to live without temptations, since Christ Himself was tempted; but that we must, by His example, fight and overcome; and that this is the way to heavenly comfort here and an immortal crown hereafter.

Conclusion. Keep as close as thou canst to the Lord Jesus, in every step He takes, and have thy eyes always upon Him, that thou mayest copy His virtues in thy life.

JANUARY 14.

ON THE SACRED NAME OF JESUS.

For the First Sunday after the Octave of the Epiphany.

1. Consider these words of the Apostle (Phil. ii.), spoken of the eternal Son of God, incarnate for us: "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell; and that every tongue shall confess, that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father." Christians, let us venerate this sacred name, and all the mysteries and heavenly truths it contains —which are so many and so great, that no tongue can sufficiently express them, nor heart conceive them. The name of Jesus came from heaven; it signifies a Saviour; but such a Saviour as should deliver His people from their sins; reconcile lost man to God; purchase for him mercy, grace, and salvation, and from a slave of Satan and a child of hell, make him a son of God and heir of heaven. What has not our Lord Jesus done, what has He not suffered, that He might be such a Jesus to us? None but He could ever fulfil the import of this heavenly name; none but a God-man, an Emmanuel, that is, God with us, could save His people from their sins, and be to them a never-failing source in all true good; even to such a degree as to make them in a manner partners in His divinity.

2. Consider that the name of Jesus is a name of virtue and power. In this name the Church of God was planted throughout the earth. In this name the apostles wrought all kinds of miracles, and even raised the dead to life. By this name millions of martyrs have overcome death in all its shapes. This name has peopled the deserts with holy solitaries, and every nation of the

Christian world, in every age, with saints, who, "looking upon Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith," have, through His name, overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, and are now set down with Jesus on His throne, according to the promise He made to them that conquer in His name (Rev. iii. 21). To this sacred name so many mighty monarchs have yielded themselves captive, submitting both themselves and their kingdoms to this great Conqueror, and oftentimes leaving even their crown and sceptre for love of this divine name. O kingdom of Jesus, kingdom of mercy and grace, when wilt thou extend thy conquests over all the universe, and bring all kings and people, all nations and hearts, to bow down, embrace, and give all praise and glory to this adorable name?

3. Consider that the name of Jesus carries with it an unspeakable majesty, tempered with humility, meekness, sweetness, and love; inasmuch as it expresses to us God made man—even a poor, meek, and humble man—out of pure love for us. It shows forth all the divine attributes, stooping, as we may say, to the work of our redemption, in order to raise us up from the dunghill, and bring us to a heavenly kingdom. Jesus is a name of mercy, a name of comfort, a name of grace and salvation: it promises pardon and forgiveness to penitent sinners: it preaches to them deliverance from slavery and bondage; the discharge of their debts; the healing of all their maladies; and their rescue from their enemies and from the wrath to come. It supports the Christian pilgrim under his labours; it comforts him in his afflictions; it is his refuge in danger; it sets before him the source of all good; it encourages him to pray with the assurance that there is nothing but what he may obtain, if he prays in the name of his Saviour. It puts to flight all the powers of hell; they cannot bear that sacred name. It conquers the world and the flesh; in fine, opens heaven to its true lovers and followers. O sacred name, mayest thou be always in our hearts and on our lips! It was so with the blessed Apostle St. Paul; may we, like him, find all things in Jesus!

Conclusion. Ever venerate the divine name of Jesus, as presenting to your soul the principal object of the Christian's faith, the strongest ground of his hope, and the chief motive, and most powerful attraction, to engage His love, viz., God incarnate, and crucified for us. Thus you may exercise, as often as you hear His sacred name, the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love of God.

JANUARY 15.

On our Lord's changing water into wine at the marriage-feast of Cana (St. John ii.).

1. Consider these words of the Gospel, "There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and His disciples." Happy marriage, which our Lord was pleased to honour with His presence and with His first miracle! He Himself was the author and institutor of marriage; and, therefore, was pleased to give it a sanction and a blessing by assisting at it. He came to marry, as it were, by His incarnation, our human nature with His divine person; He came to marry Himself to His Church, and by imparting to it a spiritual grace, to raise Christian matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament—which should be a sacred and mysterious sign of His perpetual union with His Church. He came to espouse our souls to Himself; and, therefore, was pleased to favour this marriage (in which the contracting parties were, probably, allied to His Blessed Mother) with His first miracle. How happy were they in inviting Jesus and Mary to their wedding! And how unhappy are they who, when they marry, "shut out God from themselves and from their mind, to give themselves to their lust" (Tob. vi. 17). "Over these the devil hath power," because they invite him, rather than Jesus, to their wedding. And is not this the true cause why so many marriages are unhappy, for want of the blessing of Jesus?

2. Consider how, in the midst of the marriage-feast, wine was wanting: to teach us how deceitful are the pleasures of the world, and how often they fail us, when we expect most from them. Jesus alone can furnish our immortal souls with the true "wine that cheereth the heart of man." His love alone can present us with pure delights, which bring with them joy and peace and a certain foretaste of heaven. He often changes, in favour of His friends, even the waters of "the torrent in the way" into delicious wine, by the consolation He gives them in their labours and afflictions, and the spiritual blessings of His grace, for advancing their souls in divine love, and bringing them nearer to Himself, the source of all sweetness; whilst the world, the flesh, and the devil do but delude us, by flattering our senses at first with a false sweetness, which quickly comes to an end, and leaves nothing behind but bitterness, discontent, and remorse.

3. Consider that this miraculous change made by our Lord, of water into wine, was a prelude to another and still more miraculous change which He made at His last supper, and will continue to make by His ministers, even to the end of the world, of bread and wine into His own body and blood. With this wonderful

miracle, He daily honours the wedding-feast of His own espousals with our souls, in order to communicate Himself to His spouses and unite them to Himself. And by means of this communication of Himself to us He operates another no less wonderful change in us, by which He changes us in a manner into Himself. The corporeal food we take, is, by means of our natural heat, changed into our flesh and blood; but this spiritual food, like fire which changes all things into itself, is not changed into our substance, but changes and transforms our souls into its own nature, to make them one with this bread of life; here by grace, hereafter by glory. O miraculous change! O blessed conversion!

Conclusion. Be ever thankful for the wonders which the Son of God has wrought, and continues to work for thee; but particularly join with the Church, at this time of Epiphany, in celebrating with love and gratitude those three miracles, which were the forerunners of all thy good: thy vocation to the true faith, thy being regenerated in Christ by baptism, and admitted to His heavenly feast in the blessed Eucharist, in which thou art incorporated with Him. Who can ever sufficiently love and praise Him for these wonders of His love to us!

JANUARY 16.

On the necessity of Consideration.

1. Consider and take a view of the whole Christian world and see how much Satan and sin everywhere reign. See how many thousands in every nation, of all degrees and conditions, pass their lives in mortal sin, with little or no concern, or apprehension either of death, judgment, or hell; see how they indulge their passions, and prefer every empty toy, before their immortal souls, before their God, and a happy eternity; see how numbers of them live without God, and in total forgetfulness of Him; then see how hell opens wide its jaws, and daily swallows down thousands; cut off, alas! in the midst of their sins, when they least expect it, and hurried away in a moment from their shortlived, empty, and deceitful satisfactions, to dreadful and everlasting torments. And whence proceeds this dismal scene of evils, but from the want of consideration? "With desolation is all the land made desolate," saith the prophet, "because there is none that considereth in the heart" (Jer. xii. 11).

2. Consider the great truths which Christian faith teaches. That there is a God infinitely good, whose eye is always upon us; a God infinitely good and infinitely just, and who hates wilful sin with an infinite hatred; a God who is our first beginning and our last end, our Creator and Redeemer, to whom we belong by all kind of titles; who made us for Himself, and sent us hither for no other purpose but to love and serve Him in this world, and to

be eternally happy with Him in the next. That there is another life hereafter, in comparison with which the present is but a moment; that death will quickly separate us from all these visible things, and send us into another region, where all that worldlings have set their hearts on will appear as smoke; that there is a judgment to come; and that there is a heaven and a hell. All these are articles of the Christian faith, all most certainly true, and in themselves very moving. And do Christians believe these truths? They must believe them, or they are no Christians. But how, then, is it possible they should live as the generality do? how is it possible that such as believe these things should live on in sin, and walk in the broad road that leads to hell? It is for want of consideration; it is because they do not think.

3. Consider that the great difference between the good and the bad Christian is, that the one thinks well on the truths he believes, and by that means lets them sink deep into his soul, and take root there, so that they bring forth in him the fruits of all virtues; whereas the other does not think, and therefore is little or nothing affected with the truths of the Gospel; they make no impression upon him, because his faith is asleep, or rather dead, for want of consideration. What wonderful effects have we not seen produced in the world by consideration? How many, even of the greatest sinners, have been reclaimed by it, and drawn back from the very jaws of hell? How many has it sent from the midst of Babylon, to seek their God in solitude, and to consecrate their lives to Him? Oh, that men would but think! What a reformation should we see in the world! Thinking is the true way to heaven; and not thinking, the high road to hell!

Conclusion. Allow thyself daily some time to meditate upon the great truths that relate to God and eternity. It is one of the best means thou hast to secure thy soul. They who will not think of these things now, will infallibly think on them hereafter, when their thinking will serve only to increase their eternal misery.

JANUARY 17.

On the Consideration of God.

1. Consider that we cannot be saved without the knowledge of God, and such knowledge as may effectually influence our lives, and command both our love and obedience. Now we can neither know God, nor love Him as we ought, without the help of consideration. Consideration discovers to us His infinite beauty and perfection, and the many pressing motives we have to dedicate ourselves wholly to His love and service. Consideration sets before our eyes His eternal love and His benefits to us, and convinces us that He is both infinitely good in Himself, and infinitely

good to us. Without consideration, we know these things, as if we knew them not; we have eyes and see not. But when these truths are duly weighed and considered by the soul, the light of the knowledge of God begins to dispel our darkness; and in our meditation the fire of His love breaks forth into flames, which sweetly carry up the soul towards God, and hinder her from ever forgetting Him.

2. Consider how large a field we have in God for our meditation, whether we consider Him as He is in Himself, and in His divine attributes, or with relation to what He is to us, and the titles He has been pleased to assume in our regard. He is in Himself eternal, that is, without beginning, without end, without change, self-existent, independent; He is Being itself; He alone properly is; "I am who am" says He (Exod. iii.), all else is nothing; there is no being but from Him and in Him: He is the Being of all beings. He is immense and incomprehensible, and in every way infinite; He fills heaven and earth, creating, preserving, moving, ruling, supporting all things. He is infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, infinitely good, infinitely just, infinitely merciful; He is beauty itself, truth itself, and all perfection. See, my soul, what an immense field we have here for our consideration! It has no end. Here is more than enough to employ us for all eternity; this vast ocean of the infinite perfections of the Deity, the blessed themselves cannot fathom. Here they are happily lost in the contemplation of Him who though He discovers Himself to them face to face, and fills their souls with heavenly pleasure, remains nevertheless incomprehensible even to the highest angels, because He is every way infinite.

3. Consider that there remains an ample field for meditation to help us to acquire the knowledge and love of God, in the manifold considerations of what God is in our regard, and how good He is to us. He is our sovereign good; He alone can satisfy our souls. He has loved us first, and from eternity; His thought and heart are always upon us. He is a disinterested lover, most faithful and constant, whose love never forsakes them that do not first forsake His love. He is our Maker and our Redeemer; the best of fathers, the best of friends, the spouse of our souls. He ever desires to come and dwell with us and in us, and to impart His heavenly treasures to us, in a word, to give Himself to us, and to take us to Himself. And are not here sufficient motives to oblige us to love this great and good God, infinitely good in Himself, and infinitely good to us? Is it possible that a generous heart, made through and for love, should hold out against such considerations as these, so far as to refuse a return of love? O divine love! only because thou art thought of so little, art thou so little known in this wretched world; and only because thou art so little known, art thou so little loved. Consideration is both the true way to know thee and to love thee!

Conclusion. Ever seek by daily consideration, and cherish in thy soul, this saving knowledge of God, as the source of divine love and of all thy good ; and remember that a deluge of evils will come pouring in upon the soul, where this knowledge of God is wanting (Osee iv. 1, 2).

JANUARY 18.

On Consideration of the Law of God.

1. Consider that, in order to our salvation, we must have a right knowledge of the holy law and commandments of God ; we must know the precepts and maxims of the Gospel of Jesus Christ ; and we must know them in such a manner as to be practically convinced of the beauty of this divine law, of the equity of these commandments, of the excellence of these heavenly precepts, of the truth of these Gospel maxims ; that so we may heartily embrace them, love them, and keep them. Now this infers the necessity of serious and frequent meditation on God's holy law, without which we shall not even know, as we ought, the duties and obligations of a Christian life ; much less shall we have a due esteem and love for these divine statutes and ordinances, which our great King has made to be for us the way to true life. "Blessed is the man, whose will is in the law of the Lord, and who shall meditate on it day and night. And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season ; and his leaf shall not fall off ; and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper" (Ps. i.). O happy meditation, which is the source of so much good ! Unhappy they who seldom think of this divine law, and therefore neither love it nor keep it.

2. Consider that, even under the Old Testament, God requires of His people that they should continually meditate on His divine commandments (Deut. vi. 6, &c.). "These words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart : and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them, sitting in thy house, and walking upon thy journey. lying down to bed, and rising up. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be, and shall move, between thy eyes. And thou shalt write them in the entry, and on the doors of thy house." Now if under the old law (when so great perfection was not expected of the faithful as now) God was pleased to require this close application of the soul to meditation on His divine precepts, how much more does He now expect it from us, under the new covenant of grace and love, in which He delivers His commandments to us, not graven on tables of stone, but on the tables of the heart ; not to be laid up in the ark, or deposited in an earthly sanctuary, but to be laid up within us in the sanctuary of God in our souls ? Christians, is this our glory and our wisdom ; this is

our happiness above all other people, to have the divine law written in our hearts ; to keep it there by love and affection, and to read it by attention and meditation, lest otherwise we lose so great a treasure.

3. Consider what were the sentiments of the Royal Prophet with regard to the law and commandments of God, and the duty of meditating continually upon them. He has abundantly declared them in the 118th Psalm, where there is scarcely one verse in which the beauty and excellence of the divine law, the love and observance of it, the happiness of keeping it, and the advantages of meditating on it, are not strongly inculcated. For which reason the Church, in her canonical hours of prayer, appoints this Psalm for the daily devotion of her children, in order to inspire into them the like sentiments, with relation to the holy law and commandments of God, and to oblige them daily to meditate upon these divine ordinances. Christians, can anything be of so great importance to you, as to study well the true way to a happy eternity ? Can any other science deserve your attention in comparison with this ? Is not your all here at stake ? And what other way is there to secure to your souls a happy eternity, but knowing and keeping the law and commandments of God ? This, then, calls for your study and attention by daily consideration and meditation.

Conclusion. Turn your thoughts henceforward from vain and curious searches into things little or nothing to your purpose, to daily considering what God requires of you by His holy law ; what your duty is to Him ; and what His will is in your regard. The study of this is our great business. How little will all other sciences avail, if this be neglected !

JANUARY 19.

On the Consideration of Ourselves.

1. Consider that besides the obligation we are under of daily consideration, in order to know God and our duty to Him, there is another branch of knowledge, which calls for our serious attention and meditation ; and this is the knowledge of ourselves. "This is the highest and most profitable lesson," says the devout à Kempis, "truly to know and to despise ourselves." Knowledge of ourselves is the foundation of true humility, which is the virtue that teaches us to despise ourselves ; and humility is the foundation of all other virtues ; they have all a necessary dependence upon it. So that the knowledge of ourselves is, in effect, the foundation of all virtues. Now this knowledge of ourselves is not to be acquired without frequent and serious consideration. For, to know ourselves rightly, we must consider attentively our origin and extraction ; what we have hitherto

been ; what we are now ; and what we shall be hereafter. Such considerations as these will open our eyes and convince us, what poor wretches we are, and how little reason we have to be proud ; on the contrary, how many urgent reasons we have to despise ourselves and be thoroughly humble.

2. Consider, therefore, your extraction ; as to your body, out of dirt and corruption ; as to your soul, out of nothing ; and whatsoever you have, either as to body or soul, is not your own, but the property of your Maker. Reflect, that you no sooner came into being but you were defiled with sin, and were a child of wrath ; that your whole life has been one continued course of sin and ingratitude. And how often have you fallen into the worst of evils, that bottomless pit of mortal sin ? What a dreadful figure did you then make in the sight of God and His holy angels ? What confusion, what horror, what eternal damnation was then your due ! And is not this perhaps your case at this day ? What title have you then to any regard, either from God or man ? What claim to any benefit or service from any of God's creatures ? or what just complaint could you make if all the world should abhor you as a traitor to God, a slave to the devil, and a victim of hell ; and all creatures join against you, to revenge the cause of their Creator ? Reflect, also, on the many miseries you daily lie under ; the little light there is in you for discerning true good from that which is so only in appearance ; the strength of your passions and self-love ; your repugnance to taking true pains for acquiring real good, and the violent bent of your inclination to evil. And then consider how soon death will be with you, and send your body to the worms, and your soul to the bar of divine justice, under a dreadful uncertainty as to your eternal lot. And see if, in the consideration of these things, you will not find matter enough to cure your pride, and bring you to a true sense of your manifold misery and corruption ; that so you may learn entirely to distrust yourself, to be ever humble, and to place your whole confidence in God.

3. Consider the other great advantages the soul acquires by often entering into herself, by means of serious consideration and taking an impartial view of the whole state of her interior. She discovers her spiritual maladies, to which before she was a stranger, and is thus enabled to seek and apply proper remedies to them. She finds out the secret ambushes of her enemies, especially those more subtile ones of pride and self-love, which are continually seeking to impose upon and deceive her. She learns to distinguish between the different motions of nature and grace, to watch over her own heart, to regulate its affections and inclinations, to guard against her passions, and to order her interior in such a manner, as to be agreeable to Him who desires to make it His everlasting temple. How happy is it for the soul

thus to know herself! What will it avail a man to know all things else, if he be a stranger to himself!

Conclusion. Make the knowledge of thyself one of thy principal studies for the future. The saints have always considered the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of themselves, as the most necessary of all sciences. Study well, by means of daily meditation, this science of the saints. Daily pray with St. Augustine, Noverim te, noverim me. Lord, give me grace to know thee, give me grace to know myself.

JANUARY 20.

On our First Beginning.

1. Consider, my soul, that not very long ago thou hadst no being at all, nor any share in the transactions of the world; thou wast not even so much as thought of by any creature upon earth. In this abyss of nothing thou hadst remained from all eternity; and there must have continued to all eternity, infinitely beneath the condition even of the meanest or least considerable of God's creatures; so that whatsoever thou hast at present above this mere nothing is no acquisition of thy own, but the pure gift of thy Maker. Down, then, with all self-conceit and presumption; down with all vainglory; acknowledge thy true origin, thy original nothing; sit down in the lowest place; ascribe nothing to thyself as of thy own growth, but thy manifold sins; give the glory of all the rest to thy Maker.

2. Consider who it was that drew thee out of the abyss of nothing into this being which thou now enjoyest; who gave thee this power of thinking, this conscious life, this will, this memory, this understanding; who made for thee thy soul and body. No other but He who made heaven and earth—even the eternal, immense, infinite Deity. And how came this great God to think of making thee? What did He see in thee that could move Him to love thee, and to bestow this being upon thee? It was nothing but His own infinite goodness, for there could be nothing in thee worthy of His love: He stood in no need of thee; thou couldst do Him no service. Embrace, then, with all the powers of thy soul, this infinite goodness of thy God. Give thy whole being to Him who has given it all to thee. Dedicate thy whole self to His love and service, for time and eternity.

3. Consider that God made thee after His own image and likeness, that He might engage thee the more to love Him. This image and likeness is in thy soul, which is a spirit; and in the spiritual powers of thy soul; in thy freewill, which nothing controls, and which can be satisfied with nothing less than God; and in thy understanding, which is capable of soaring above all things, visible and invisible, and reaching to the contempla-

tion of God Himself. Let not, then, this noble spirit lie any longer grovelling in the mire of the earth! Let not this will that was made to be a queen, be a slave to flesh and blood. Let not this understanding, this mind, this thought, that should contemplate heavenly truths, be bowed down to empty earthly toys.

Conclusion. Be ever mindful of thy own nothingness, and that thou hast received all thou hast from the pure bounty of God. The sense and remembrance of this truth will teach thee to despise thyself, and to love thy Maker with all thy strength.

JANUARY 21.

On our Last End.

1. Consider, my soul, why thou camest hither—what is thy business in this mortal life—for what end has God made thee—upon what errand has He sent thee hither. This should have been the subject of thy meditation from thy first coming to the use of reason! and hast thou ever yet seriously thought on it? Thou canst not plead ignorance, for one of the first things thou wast taught was, that thou wast made for God, and that the business for which thou camest into the world was to know Him, love Him, and serve Him here, and so to come to enjoy Him hereafter in a happy eternity. How noble, how glorious, how blessed is this end for which thou wast made! How good is thy God, who has made thee for Himself and for heaven, and even from all eternity has designed this happiness for thee!

2. Consider that, properly speaking, thou hast but one thing to do in this mortal life; and that is no other than to answer this end for which thou wast made, by dedicating thyself, in good earnest, to the love and service of thy Maker. This is the "one thing necessary" (Luke x. 42). If thou apply thyself seriously to this great business, all is well; if thou neglect this, all will be lost, whatever success thou mayest meet with in anything else. "What will it profit a man to gain the whole world if he lose his own soul;" and with his soul lose his God and a happy eternity? Let all other business, then, be subordinate to this; let all that in no way conduces to this be despised as vain and unprofitable; let all that is opposite to this be avoided, rejected, and abhorred, as hurtful and pernicious. How true is it, "vanity of vanities, and all is vanity," besides loving God, and serving Him alone (*Kempis*).

3. Consider the great blindness and misery of worldlings who live in continual neglect and forgetfulness of this their only business; whose pursuits are after mere vanities; who weary themselves like children, in running after butterflies; in catching at bubbles and empty shadows, such as vain honours, false riches, and deceitful pleasures that last but a moment; and for these

they forfeit God and eternity. And has not this been hitherto thy own case? Be confounded at the thought of having been so strangely senseless and so wretched. Detest the errors of thy past life; and now at least resolve to mind thy true and only business, and turn to thy God with all thy heart.

Conclusion. Since God is both thy first beginning and thy last end—since thou art made by Him and for Him, and all thy powers, senses, and faculties are designed to bring thee to Him—employ them henceforward in serving and glorifying Him: thus only shalt thou find true comfort here and heaven hereafter.

JANUARY 22.

On the titles God has to our Service.

1. Consider that we belong to God by all manner of titles, and therefore cannot, without the most crying injustice, alienate any part of our being from Him, or refuse to employ our lives in His divine service. We are His by creation, because He made us, and made us for Himself; and therefore has given us a soul, capable of knowing, loving, and enjoying Him, and unable to find true rest or satisfaction but in Him. Our whole being is from Him; our soul and body, with all our powers, senses, and faculties, belong to Him; all whatsoever we possess, interiorly or exteriorly, is His. And as the fund is His, so the whole produce ought to be His. As we are absolutely and entirely His property, and our time and our talents are but lent us by Him, so we are indispensably obliged to dedicate our time, our thoughts, words, and actions to Him. And have we ever rightly considered this obligation? We belong to God in like manner by the title of conservation, by which He preserves and maintains every moment the being He has given us; otherwise we should presently return to our ancient nothing. So that as in every moment we are indebted to Him for our continuance in being what we are, so every moment we are obliged to be His.

2. Consider that we belong to God, and that in a very particular manner, by redemption; by which the Son of God has purchased us for Himself and for His Father, with His own most precious blood. For we had sold ourselves to Satan; we were become His slaves; we had no longer any share in God, or title to Him; we were rebels and traitors to Him by sin; and as such we stood condemned to death and hell. But, behold, the Son of God, out of pure love and compassion, comes down from heaven to redeem us; He pays the price of our ransom—a great price indeed, even the last drop of His most sacred blood—to deliver us from Satan, sin, and hell; to reconcile us to His Father; and to purchase mercy, grace, and salvation for us. So that by virtue of this redemption He claims us as His own property, and it would be a sacrilegious robbery to alienate from Him these souls of ours,

which He has purchased with His own blood ; it would be even, in the language of the Apostle, "treading under foot the Son of God and esteeming the blood of the testament unclean, by which we are sanctified" (Heb. x. 29).

3. Consider that we belong to God, by solemn vows and covenants, and by the dedication by which we were happily and holily dedicated and consecrated to Him in our baptism and confirmation, and sanctified to be His temples for ever. Now, things that are once solemnly consecrated to God, and more especially such as are made temples of the living God, must be always His ; and it would be a grievous sacrilege to pervert them from His service to profane uses ; and therefore it would be highly criminal in us to pervert these souls of ours from the love and service of God, to whom they have been thus solemnly dedicated, and to profane and defile them by wilful sin. We belong to Him also in the quality of our King, our Father, our Lord and Master, the great Sovereign of the universe, the Being of all beings ; and upon these and many more titles His Divine Majesty claims our love and service as His undoubted right. Let us never be so miserable as to refuse Him what He so justly claims ; let us look upon it as our greatest happiness that we belong entirely to Him.

Conclusion. Render faithfully to God what upon so many titles belongs to Him, by giving your whole self to Him, and employing henceforward both your soul and body in executing His will.

JANUARY 23.

On the happiness of serving God.

1. Consider those words of the prophet (Isa. iii. 10), "Say to the just man, It is well," and reflect on the many advantages this short word well comprises and ensures to the just both for time and eternity. Honours, riches, and pleasures are things on which the world sets the greatest value ; but they are not to be found where the world seeks them, but only in the service of God. It is indeed a greater honour to be a servant of God, than to be emperor of all the earth. What, then, to be His friend and favourite, His spouse, His child, His temple? Can any worldly honours be compared with these? How glorious a dignity it is to be heir-apparent to a heavenly and eternal kingdom ! How happy in the meantime, during our mortal pilgrimage, to walk and converse with God ; to be as familiar as one pleases with this great King ; to have admittance to Him whenever we will ; to have the assurance of a favourable audience, and of obtaining all our requests ! How truly honourable is it to have one's name enrolled in the Book of Life ; one's character established, not in the mean village of this world (which, nevertheless, cannot help admiring and esteeming true virtue), but in the great city of

God, the heavenly Jerusalem! Let such honours as these be the objects of thy ambition.

2. Consider how rich the just man is; not always indeed in worldly possessions, which any accident may take away, and which can never satisfy the heart; but in treasures infinitely more valuable, of virtue, grace, and merit, which all the money in the world is insufficient to purchase, and which make the soul rich for eternity. But the servants of God have a still greater treasure in God Himself; whom the whole world cannot take from them, so long as they take care not to drive Him away by wilful sin. "He is their protector; and their reward exceeding great" (Gen. xv. 1). He is always with them; He is a tender father to them; the eye of His special providence is ever upon them; His angels encamp about them, to defend them and deliver them from evil. In a word, God is all things to them that fear and love Him; so that even as to the goods of the world He never forsakes those who do not first forsake Him. See thou, my soul, seek no other treasure but Him; He will make thee rich indeed; fear no loss but losing Him. If thou hast Him, nothing can make thee miserable; but without Him, nothing can make thee happy.

3. Consider the solid pleasures that attend a virtuous life; such as the satisfaction, peace, and joy of a good conscience; the sense that holy souls have of God's goodness and love for them; the experience they have of His sweetness, in recollection and prayer, the consolations of the Holy Ghost, and the ravishing delights they often find in God, as a certain foretaste of the joys of heaven; the comfortable prospect of a happy eternity, after their short mortal pilgrimage; and, above all, their love of God, and blessed conformity to His will in all things, which sweeten even the greatest crosses. Such pleasures as these are far beyond all that worldlings can pretend to—pleasures pure and spiritual, which have supported and even given inexpressible joy to the martyrs, under the worst of torments; which, for other saints, have sweetened their labours and penitential austerities, and made them think whole nights too short when spent with God in prayer. How great, then, is that error, how pernicious that deceit, by which Satan persuades the children of this world that there are no pleasures in a virtuous life! whereas, indeed, there is no true pleasure anywhere else!

Conclusion. Since thy whole happiness, in time as well as in eternity, depends upon loving and serving God, set out from this hour in quest of true happiness, by entering upon the beautiful path of virtue, which alone can bring thee to it.

JANUARY 24.

On the vanity of things that keep worldlings from the service of God.

1. Consider how truly vain are all those things which poor deluded worldlings prefer before their God—empty bubbles, mere toys and trifles, false appearances, deceitful baits, laid by the enemy to catch their souls; gilded pills, that conceal deadly poison; deluding dreams and airy phantoms, that will all vanish in a moment, and leave their hands and their hearts empty; and then the scene will change, and their fool's paradise of imaginary happiness shall turn to real, dreadful, and everlasting evil. "O ye children of men, how long will ye be in love with vanity?" how long will you run after mere lies and deceit? Reflect upon those that have gone before you; upon those that have enjoyed the most of what this world could afford of honours, riches, and pleasures; and tell me what judgment you think they make of them now. They will certainly cry out with Solomon (Eccles. ii. 11), that in all these things they found nothing but "vanity and vexation of spirit." They will loudly condemn their past folly and madness, in having set their hearts upon such toys, to the loss of God and their souls.

2. Consider and take a nearer view of these worldly idols, these phantoms of honours, riches, and pleasures; and see with what toil they are acquired, with what care and fear they are possessed, and how easily they are lost; what great evils they are exposed to; what a slavery they bring along with them; how short and inconstant they are; how false and deceitful; how often embittered with gall; how mean and unworthy the affection of a Christian; how far beneath the dignity of an immortal soul, made for nothing less than God; and how incapable of giving any solid content or satisfaction to a heart that can never rest but in its Maker! How truly miserable, then, are the children of Babylon, who are enslaved to things so base, so vile, so filthy! How wretched is the life that is spent in this manner, in weaving cobwebs, in running after butterflies, in catching at shadows, in squandering away those precious hours that were given to secure to the soul a happy eternity; in impertinent amusements, in idle, foolish, and often sinful conversation, in dressing out, or pampering a carcass that must quickly be the food of worms! Surely such a life as this must be irksome and tedious, void of all true content, joy, peace, or comfort here, and of all prospect of happiness hereafter.

3. Consider how this folly and misery of worldlings is described by the prophet Isaia (ch. lix.), where he tells them that they put their trust in that which is a mere nothing, that they speak vanities; that is, their discourse and conversation is

empty, foolish, and nothing to the purpose; that they conceive labour, and bring forth iniquity; that their thoughts and devices are vain and unprofitable, and that their ways lead to destruction; that their paths are crooked, and that there is no judgment in their steps; and that whosoever treadeth in them, knoweth no peace. See how pathetically the Holy Spirit has here described the pains and labours poor worldlings take in pursuit of lying follies, which bring evil and death to their souls, without any real profit or pleasure, and learn thou to be more wise than to walk in their footsteps.

Conclusion. Never imitate this wretched choice of blind mortals, who turn away from God to follow cheating vanities; but despise from thy heart all those childish toys, and turn to the paths of wisdom, virtue, and truth.

JANUARY 25.

On the Conversion of St. Paul.

1. Consider and admire the wonders of the grace of God in the conversion of St. Paul, suddenly changed from a fiery zealot for the Jewish religion, and bloody persecutor of the Church of Christ, to be a fervent Christian, a zealous preacher of the Gospel, a vessel of election, to carry the name of Christ to nations and kings; a doctor of the Gentiles, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and a most eminent Saint. Learn hence the greatness of God's mercy, and the power of His grace; learn never to despair of the conversion of any one, how remote soever he may seem from the faith or grace of God. Who could be more remote than the convert of this day? Assure thyself that the hand of God is not shortened, and that His power, mercy, and goodness is as great as ever; and therefore never cease to pray to God for the conversion of infidels and sinners. It is likely the conversion of St. Paul is in great measure owing to the prayers of St. Stephen. Join with the Church on this day in glorifying God and returning Him thanks, through Jesus Christ, for the wonders of His mercy and grace in St. Paul, and the many thousands that were brought, through his preaching, to the ways of truth and life.

2. Consider that the conversion of St. Paul is, by the Church, set before our eyes this day as a model of a perfect conversion, from which sinners may learn:— 1. How readily they ought to correspond with the call and grace of God inviting them home; 2. How they ought to yield themselves entirely to Him; and 3. What their lives ought afterwards to be, in consequence of that distinguishing mercy which God has shown them in their conversion. Paul was no sooner called by the voice of Jesus Christ, but he at once obeyed the call, and yielded himself to be His for ever. The prayer he made was short in words, but very

expressive of the perfect disposition of the soul, and of the sacrifice he desired to make of himself without reserve, to the holy will of Him who called him. "Lord," said he, "what wilt Thou have me to do?" As much as to say, "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready; here I am prostrate at Thy feet, desirous only to know and to do Thy will; send me where Thou pleasest, ordain concerning me what Thou pleasest; I desire to be Thine in life and death; I desire to have no exceptions to Thy blessed will." See also how, being sent into the city, where he was to learn of Ananias the will of God, and to receive from him the sacrament of regeneration to wash away his sins, he continues for three days, neither eating nor drinking, but wholly employed in prayer. This was showing himself to be a convert indeed; this was being quite in earnest in preparing himself for baptism; this was laying a solid foundation for a new life. Oh that all penitents would set this example before their eyes, when they purpose to make their peace with God; and would, like Paul, prepare themselves by fervent and long-continued prayers, joined with the exercise of mortification and penance! Thus we should see other sort of conversions than we commonly meet with nowadays.

3. Consider the sentiments of St. Paul, with regard to the life he thought himself obliged to lead, in consequence of the mercy God had shown him in his conversion. He had ever before his eyes the greatness of that mercy; he considered himself as having been the greatest of sinners, and how God had spared him all the while he went on in sin, and without any merit on his part had by an evident miracle wrought, in an instant, that total change in him; and therefore he was convinced, as he declared in his words, and showed forth in his practice, that he could do no less than devote his life to the love and service of his Saviour, to testify his gratitude for the love He had shown him. This consideration carried him through all his labours and afflictions, and animated him to meet death in all its shapes (for he was dying daily, as he tells us), because Christ had loved him, and died for him, and therefore the love of Christ pressed him that he might live no longer to himself, but to Him who had shown him mercy. Oh that all converts would have the like sentiments.

Conclusion. Learn to practise the lessons which St. Paul teaches you in his conversion, and in particular to have a great esteem for the grace of reconciliation, and of that unspeakable mercy and love which God has shown you in receiving you again after you had fallen from Him by sin. Learn also from him to testify your gratitude, by dedicating yourself henceforward, in good earnest, to the love and service of Him who has done such great things for you.

JANUARY 26.

On the evil of Mortal Sin.

1. Consider the enormous malice of mortal sin, inasmuch as it is opposed to the infinite goodness of God, and thou wilt find it to be a bottomless pit, which no created understanding can fathom. As none but God Himself can fully comprehend His own infinite goodness, so none but God Himself can perfectly comprehend the infinite enormity that is found in this opposite evil. And as God essentially loves His own goodness with an infinite love, and cannot cease to love it, no more than He can cease to be God—so He essentially hates mortal sin with an infinite hatred, and cannot cease to hate it wherever He sees it. And didst thou think, my soul, that thou wast committing so wicked, so dreadful, so abominable an evil, when first thou rebelled against thy God by mortal sin? How couldst thou dare so often to repeat this enormous treason? or how couldst thou endure to carry about with thee, for so long a time, so odious, so hideous a monster? How much art thou indebted to the boundless mercies of thy God, and to the precious blood of His Son, that He has tolerated thee so long, and not cast thee into hell!

2. Consider that there is not upon earth, no, nor in hell itself, a greater evil than mortal sin: it is without comparison the greatest of all evils; it is the parent both of the devil and of hell, for hell was made only for mortal sin, and the devil was an angel till he was transformed into a devil by mortal sin. So that, in truth, mortal sin is a monster more hideous than hell, more abominable than the devil himself. This dreadful evil, which the damned see and feel for all eternity in the midst of their souls, torments them more than all the devils; it oppresses them with its everlasting weight; it feeds the ever-gnawing worm of their guilty conscience; it is the fuel of that fire that never is extinguished; mortal sin possesses their souls, and both keeps God eternally from them and them eternally from God. Oh that sinners had, whilst here, a just notion of this dreadful evil! It would effectually keep them from feeling its enormous weight hereafter. If they did but sufficiently apprehend what they are going to do when they commit mortal sin, they would choose a thousand deaths before so great an evil.

3. Consider that what makes sin the greatest of all evils, is because it strikes at God Himself. It is a rebellion, a high treason against Him. Satan, the first sinner, proudly sought to place himself on the throne of God; and all who unhappily follow the example of that arch-rebel, by consenting to mortal sin, are in some measure guilty of the like perversity, inasmuch as they turn away from God, as he did, affecting, in like manner,

independence of God, and impiously prefer their own will, and gratifying their own inclinations and passions, before His holy will and His divine ordinances. Thus they renounce their allegiance to Him, and disclaim His authority and sovereignty over them, and refuse to be subject to His laws; they condemn His wisdom, they slight His justice, they refuse His mercy and goodness; and instead of seeking in the first place, as they are bound to do, the glory of their Maker's name, the propagation of His kingdom, and the fulfilling of His will, they set up that idol self in place of the living God! they seek their own worldly honour, interest, and pleasure more than His; and to this unhappy idol of their own self-love they sacrifice soul and conscience, their God and their all. Can there be any evil comparable to this?

Conclusion. Utterly renounce, detest, and abhor, for the time to come, all mortal sin, and fly from it as from hell itself. And as to thy past guilt, bewail it from thy heart as the greatest of evils, and do penance for it all thy lifetime.

JANUARY 27.

On the manifold aggravations that are found in Mortal Sin.

1. Consider that besides the bottomless depth of the malice of mortal sin, from its opposition to the infinite goodness of God, and the high treason it contains against His Divine Majesty, there are other enormities and heinous aggravations in every mortal sin, that beyond measure extend and multiply its guilt. The first of these is the sinner's black ingratitude to God, which violently aggravates the guilt of every sin he commits against his Maker and Redeemer, his dearest friend and perpetual benefactor; from whom he has received, and daily receives, all that he has and all that he is—and this out of pure love, without any desert on his part, and such love as can suffer no comparison, since it brought our Lord down from heaven, to die for the very wretch who dares thus ungratefully to offend Him and crucify Him again by sin. I know not whether any of the devils in hell, if God had done so much for them, would have been so ungrateful as to offend Him any more.

2. Consider the manifold injustice found in every mortal sin, in the violation of the right and title God has to us and to our love and service; as He is our first beginning and our last end, who made us, and made us for Himself. He is the very Being of our being, the Monarch of the whole creation, Lord of us and of all things; He purchased us and marked us out for His own; and we, on our part, have been solemnly dedicated and consecrated to Him, that we might be His both for time and eternity. The wretched sinner breaks through all these considerations; withdraws himself from his Maker, his Lord, and his Redeemer; villanously

and sacrilegiously alienates from Him what upon all these titles is strictly His, and makes all over to His mortal enemy, and in exchange for some petty trifle sells to him his soul and his God. Does not such enormous injustice cry to Heaven for vengeance? More especially in Christians, in whom it is joined with the aggravating circumstance of a profanation of the temple of God, and notorious perfidy by violation of the solemn vows and engagements made to Him.

3. Consider that in every mortal sin there is found in some measure the guilt of the breach of all the ten commandments, according to that of St. James ii. 10, "He that offends in one point is become guilty of all." Because whosoever wilfully breaks through any part of the divine law by mortal sin, violates the first commandment by turning away from the true and living God, and refusing Him the worship that is due to Him; he is guilty of idolatry by worshipping the creature, which is the object or occasion of his sin, "rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever" (Rom. i. 25). He profanes the sacred name of God, and blasphemes Him, if not in word, at least in deed, by treading His authority under foot. He violates the true and everlasting sabbath of God's rest, by the servile work of sin, by which he makes himself a slave to Satan. He dishonours, in a most outrageous manner, the best of fathers, is guilty of the murder of his own soul, and of the Son of God Himself, whom he crucifies by sin. He is guilty of spiritual adultery, by prostituting to Satan his soul, which has been espoused to Christ. He is guilty of theft, robbery, and sacrilege, as we have seen above, by taking from God what belongs to Him. He bears false witness against the law of God, in favour of lies and deceit, for all sin is a lie. And, that nothing may be wanting to complete his wickedness, he is guilty of coveting what is not his, and what he has no right to, and what the law of God restrains him from. So manifold is the guilt that is found in any one wilful sin.

Conclusion. Detest the ingratitude, injustice, perfidiousness, and all the other aggravations found in mortal sin; and make it thy continual prayer, that thou mayest rather die ten thousand deaths than once incur this dreadful complication of evils.

JANUARY 28.

On the presumption, folly, and madness of the wilful Sinner.

1. Consider the desperate presumption of a worm of the earth, that dares to attack, by wilful sin, the Almighty Lord and Maker of heaven and earth, who holds the thread of his life in His hand, and can in that moment let him drop into hell. And what can the wretch expect from making war with God?—with God who is eternal, immense, and every way infinite; God whose eye is

ever upon all his ways, and who has an infinite hatred of mortal sin ; God without whom he can neither live, move, nor be ! What can he expect from making God his enemy, but the loss of all manner of good, and the incurring all misery both temporal and eternal. Alas ! from the moment he engaged in this desperate war, the sword of God is drawn against him and continually hangs over his guilty head, and the perils of death, judgment, and hell encompass him on all sides. The leader whom he follows in the warfare is already damned, his fellow-soldiers are daily falling down the precipice and crowding into hell, and what has he to hope for ?

2. Consider the folly and madness that is found in every wilful sin ; forasmuch as the sinner, by his own act and deed, freely and deliberately parts with his God, an infinite good, and the source of all good ; gives up his title to heaven, together with all his treasures of virtue, grace, and merit, and sells his soul into the bargain, to be a slave to Satan here and a victim of hell hereafter. In exchange for all this he purchases nothing but bubbles and shadows, that are unable to afford him one moment of solid content, that leave nothing behind them but uneasiness and remorse, and continually expose him to all kinds of misery both for time and eternity. Is it possible to conceive greater madness than this ? Alas ! it is exchanging heaven for hell, God for the devil, the supreme and infinite good for the very abyss of endless and infinite evil.

3. Consider the folly and madness of sinners in looking for any success in their ways, or blessing on their undertakings, whilst they oppose, by wilful sin, the holy will of God, and violate His divine law and commandments. All men have an inbred desire of their own well-being ; this the sinner pretends to seek in the unhappy choice he makes, whenever he indulges himself in sin ; but, alas ! in vain does he seek it where it is not to be found. He seeks for happiness in the way that leads to misery ; he seeks for honour in that which is in itself most disgraceful and strips him of all true honour ; he seeks an imaginary gain in that which brings with it the greatest of all losses ; he seeks for pleasure, and meets with pain, discontent, and uneasiness ; he seeks for peace and joy, and finds nothing but disturbance and sorrow ; he seeks for false liberty, and falls into real slavery ; he seeks for life, but all in vain, because he seeks it in the region of death. And can anything be more extravagant and mad than to seek for any good, whilst wilfully turning one's back upon the source of all good ? Alas ! the soul experiences to her cost, in the opposition and disappointment she meets with, in all her projects and pursuits, the truth of those menaces of God by the prophet Osee, "I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and I will stop it up with a wall, and she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, and shall not overtake them,

and she shall seek them and shall not find them" (ii. 6, &c.). For it is even thus the poor sinner, in all he turns to, when he turns away from God, meets with a hedge of thorns in his way, which he cannot pass over, and runs after a shadow that flies from him.

Conclusion. Be more wise, and seek thy happiness where it is to be found, in the love and service of God; if thou seek it anywhere else, thou shalt lose thy labour, and be in danger of losing thyself too, and of condemning thy folly and madness for eternity.

JANUARY 29.

On the havoc sin has made in the world.

1. Consider, the havoc this monstrous evil of wilful sin made in its beginning, in heaven itself, when one sin, consented to but in thought, changed in an instant millions of most beautiful angels into hideous devils, cast them out of heaven, and condemned them eternally to hell. O dreadful poison, that could thus blast in a moment so many legions of heavenly spirits! O dreadful guilt, that could draw such a terrible and irrevocable judgment from God, whose very nature is goodness, and who loves all His works, upon His favourite creatures! and thou, my soul, who knowest this, how didst thou ever dare to sin, and how hath thy God been able to endure thee under the guilt of so many treasons?

2. Consider the havoc sin made upon earth when this monster, banished from heaven, was entertained by our first parents in the earthly paradise. Alas! in one moment it stripped them and all their race of that original justice, innocence, and sanctity in which they were created, and of all the gifts of divine grace; it wounded them in all the powers of the soul; it gave them up to the tyranny of Satan; it cast them out of paradise, and condemned them to both a temporal and eternal death. In the meantime it let loose upon them a whole army of evils, of soul and body, which are all the miserable consequences of sin, and it has entailed upon all mankind an inexpressible weakness with regard to doing good, and a violent inclination to evil; which has filled the world with innumerable sins and with most dreadful judgments, both upon individuals and upon whole nations, in punishment of sin.

3. Consider that sin, by infecting and corrupting so many of the principal creatures of God, has in some measure blasted the whole creation, and subjected it to many evils, which the Apostle (Rom. viii. 20, 21) calls "the servitude of corruption;" inasmuch as God's creatures are abused by men and devils, and made subservient to sin and corruption; as well as to vanity, inasmuch, as by occasion of sin, they are also liable to perpetual instability and a variety of defects. Hence the whole creation, by a figure

of speech, is said by the Apostle to groan and be in labour, longing as it were for its deliverance from unhappy subjection to sin—"into the liberty of the glory of the children of God;" which shall then be accomplished, when the reign of sin shall be utterly abolished; and the world being purged by the last fire, God shall make for His children "new heavens, and a new earth in which justice dwelleth" (2 Pet. iii. 13). When shall that happy hour come? when shall this hellish monster, sin, be for ever excluded from all other parts of the creation, and shut up in its proper place, never to come out to blast the world any more?

Conclusion. Abhor the evil that has made such dreadful havoc both in heaven and earth, and spare no pains to abolish it both in thyself and in others.

JANUARY 30.

On the havoc sin makes in the soul of a Christian.

1. Consider how strangely the soul is changed that falls from the state of grace into mortal sin. The metamorphosis is not unlike that of an angel into a devil. A soul in grace is a child of God, a spouse of Jesus Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit. But in the moment she consents to mortal sin, she forfeits all honour and dignity, becomes a slave of hell and of Satan, a den of unclean spirits. A soul in grace is beautiful, like an angel, and agreeable to the eyes of God and His saints; but a soul in mortal sin is ugly like the devil, and most odious, and loathsome to her Maker and His heavenly court. A soul in grace is very rich, she is worth an eternal kingdom, she always has God with her, and is entitled to the eternal possession of Him; but when she falls into mortal sin, she loses at once all her store of virtue and merit, she becomes wretchedly poor and miserable, and instead of possessing God, is possessed by the devil.

2. Consider that sin gives a mortal wound to the soul—it is its very death. For as the soul of man gives life to the body, which, when the soul is departed, is dead and becomes a lump of clay, without sense or motion, so the grace of God gives life to the soul; and that soul is dead which, by mortal sin, has lost God and driven away His grace from her. O terrible separation! O dreadful death indeed, which wants nothing but eternity to make it hell! Sinners, how can you endure yourselves under this wretched condition? If a dead carcass be so loathsome an object that few would endure to pass one night in the same bed with it, how can you bear to carry about with you, night and day, a soul dead in mortal sin, and putrified and corrupted by sinful habits? Open your eyes, now at least, to see your deplorable case, and detest the monster, sin, the cause of all your misery. Run

to Him without further delay, by humble prayer and repentance, who alone can raise the dead to life!

3. Consider how true that is in Scripture, "They that commit sin and iniquity are enemies to their own soul" (Tob. xii. 10), and "He that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul" (Ps. x. 6). Since of all the evils we can possibly incur, either here or hereafter, there is none comparable to the evil we bring upon ourselves by mortal sin; so, if all men upon earth, and all the devils in hell, should conspire, with permission from God, to do all the mischief, and inflict upon us all the torments they could invent, they would never do us half so much hurt as we do ourselves by one mortal sin. All they can do, so long as we do not consent to sin, cannot hurt the soul; whereas we ourselves, by consenting to even one mortal sin, bring upon our souls a dreadful death, both for time and eternity. Good God! never suffer us to be so wretchedly blind, as to become thus the wilful murderers of our own souls.

Conclusion. Never more join thyself with thy mortal enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, in waging war against thy own soul by wilful sin. But make it thy continual prayer to God, that He will never suffer thee to consent to so great an evil, even though thou wert to endure a thousand deaths for the refusal.

JANUARY 31.

On the Judgments of God upon Mortal Sin.

1. Consider that besides all the sad effects of mortal sin already mentioned, which are more than sufficient to demonstrate how heinous this worst of evils is in the sight of God, there still remain other convincing arguments of the hatred God bears to it, from the manifold judgments He executes and will continue to execute to the end of the world, and even to all eternity upon those who are guilty of it. Witness, of old, the judgment of the deluge, which in punishment of the general corruption of all flesh, swept off at once the sinners of the earth and hurried them down to hell. Witness the judgment of fire from heaven on Sodom and the neighbouring cities. Witness the many judgments on the rebel Israelites in the wilderness, particularly that remarkable one of the earth opening and swallowing alive Kore and his companions! and the fire from the Lord destroying in an instant fourteen thousand seven hundred of their abettors (Num. xvi.). Witness, in every age of the world, millions hurried away when they least expected it, by violent or untimely deaths, in punishment of their crying sins, besides many instances of flourishing cities, and of whole nations too, destroyed by war, pestilence, famine, or earthquakes, brought upon them by their sins. Great God! who shall not fear Thy

almighty wrath, which always looks towards wilful sinners? Who shall not fear the dreadful evil of mortal sin, which thus provokes Thy avenging justice?

2. Consider that, although these visible judgments of God upon impenitent sinners be both very common and very terrible, yet there is another kind of more secret judgment, which He daily executes upon thousands, and which is far more terrible, inasmuch as it brings upon them a more dreadful damnation. And that is, when in punishment of their abuse of grace and obstinacy in sin, He gives them up to a reprobate sense, and to blindness and hardness of heart; so that they have now no more fear or thought of God or His judgments, or any concern for their souls or for eternity. This is, indeed, the broad road to final impenitence, and is, in its consequences, the very worst of all God's judgments. It was thus He did by the Jews, according to the prediction of the royal prophet (Ps. lxviii. 24), "Letting their eyes be darkened, that they should not see, and bowing down their back always—adding iniquity upon their iniquity," by withdrawing His lights and graces from them, and so giving them up to their own wicked inclinations; and thus He daily does with thousands of habitual sinners, in punishment of their slighting and resisting His repeated calls (Prov. i. 24, &c.), suffering them to go on in their wretched ways, and to add daily sin upon sin, and consequently hell upon hell; which proves in the long run a far more dreadful judgment upon them than if, after their first sin, the earth had opened and swallowed them alive into hell.

3. Consider the judgments of God upon mortal sin, in the eternal duration of the torments of hell. Sinners, go down in spirit, whilst you are alive, to that bottomless pit, and take a view of the rigour of God's justice there, of that worm that never dies, of that fire that is never extinguished, of that everlasting rage and despair, and of all that complication of the worst of evils found in that woful dungeon, and then tell me what you think of the hatred God must bear to mortal sin, when He who is infinitely good and infinitely just, and cannot punish any one beyond what he richly deserves, condemns every soul that dies under such guilt to this extremity of misery for all eternity. Surely the awful prospect of this scene of woe must suffice to convince you out of the enormity of mortal sin! But if anything be wanting to a full conviction, turn your eyes upon Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and see how He was treated by the justice of His Father for our sins, which He had taken upon Himself to expiate. See Him agonising in the garden, and sweating blood, under their enormous weight; see the multitude and variety of torments He endures for them, till He expires upon a cruel and disgraceful cross; and how, notwithstanding the infinite dignity of His person, divine justice would admit of nothing less than all these sufferings of the Son of God for the expiation of mortal

sin; and I am persuaded that the sight of Him crucified for sin, must more effectually demonstrate to you the hatred God bears to this monstrous evil than the sight of hell itself, with all its dreadful and everlasting torments.

Conclusion. Give thanks to God for having spared thee so long in thy sins, and resolve now to labour in earnest to avert, by a serious and speedy conversion, those judgments, which thou mayest have reason to apprehend are actually hanging over thy head for thy sins.

FEBRUARY 1.

On not making light of Venial Sins.

1. Consider that although there be no comparison between the guilt of a mortal sin and that of a venial sin, as there is none between a mote and a beam (Matt. vii. 3), yet the guilt even of venial sin, considering that it is an offence against God, infinitely great and infinitely good, is so displeasing in His sight that no soul that is stained with it can be admitted into His presence till this guilt is purged away. So, also, no man living could be allowed, by any power in heaven or on earth, to commit a venial sin, if it would save a kingdom, or even the whole world; because the offence to God is a greater evil than the loss of the whole world; and we are not to do anything evil that good may come of it. Christians, do you think of this when, upon every trifling apprehension of incurring the displeasure of man, you take refuge in a lie which is sure to displease your God? Do you think of this when you go on with so little concern, indulging yourselves in vanity, curiosity, sensuality, loss of your precious time, anger, impatience, and other sinful habits, upon the notion that these are but venial sins, and therefore need not be regarded? You will find one day to your cost how much you have been deceived, if you do not correct in time this dangerous and pernicious error.

2. Consider the danger to which the soul exposes herself when she makes light of venial sin; even the danger of the very worst of evils, that is, of mortal sin, and all its dreadful consequences, both for time and eternity; according to that of the wise man (Eccles. xix. 1), "He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little." It is true, venial sin does not of itself immediately destroy the grace and love of God, and therefore does not of itself bring death to the soul, as mortal sin does; but it weakens and cools the fervour of divine love, it lessens devotion; it hinders the inspirations of the Holy Ghost from working effectually in the soul; it leaves the soul feeble and drowsy, sick and languishing; so that upon greater temptation she easily yields and falls into mortal sin. How can we expect it should be otherwise, when we have so little regard for God, or His friendship and

love, as not to care how much we displease Him, provided we can escape His avenging justice? Or, how can the fire of the love of God be kept alive in the soul, when, instead of being nourished with its proper fuel, it is continually parting with its heat and strength?

3. Consider that this danger of falling into mortal sin, by making little or no account of venial sin, is the greater because of the difficulty there often is in distinguishing between what is mortal and what is venial; since even the best divines are often at a loss to find the limits between the one and the other. So that all such as are in the unhappy disposition of venturing, without scruple, as far as the utmost limit of venial sin, are daily exposed to the danger of slipping beyond the bounds, and falling into the pit of mortal sin; the more so because of the manifold subtleties and deceits of self-love, which is ever ready to excuse the inclinations of corrupt nature, and to make that appear slight which is really grievous. This becomes more likely when persons give themselves up to a tepid, negligent life, as they generally do who make light of venial sins; for this negligence puts the soul off her guard, disarms her, and lays her open to the spiritual sins of pride, envy, and such like disorders, which are mortal sins, and which easily prevail over careless souls, and are seldom thoroughly cured.

Conclusion. Make a sincere resolution of never wilfully, and with full deliberation, consenting to any known sin, how venial soever it may seem to be, and much more of never indulging any habit or custom of any such sin. It is hard to reconcile the indulgence of such habits as these with the great commandment of the love of God above all things; at least, it cannot be expected that divine love should dwell for any long time in a heart where God is so often slighted.

FEBRUARY 2.

On Candlemas Day.

1. Consider that on this day the Blessed Virgin Mary, according to the rite prescribed by the Jewish law, came to the temple of God to be purified after child-bearing, and to make her offering according to what her poverty allowed, of a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons; the one for a whole burnt-offering, the other as a sacrifice for sin (Lev. xii.). Admire her ready obedience to a law in which in reality she was not concerned, being exempted by her singular privilege of bringing forth her Son without detriment to her virginal purity. Admire her humility in being willing to pass for a person unclean, she who was more pure than the angels, and to be excluded for forty days from touching anything that was holy, or coming near the

house of God, and to be cleansed by a sin-offering, as if she needed any such expiation. Admire her love of purity, which brought her on this day to the temple of God, to be purified with these legal sacrifices, because she was desirous of omitting nothing that could in any way contribute to increase or maintain purity. Learn to imitate these great virtues, viz., her ready obedience, her profound humility, and her great zeal and love of purity.

2. Consider that on this day the Blessed Virgin made a rich present to God in His temple, infinitely surpassing all the offerings that had ever been made there before; when, according to the law of the first-born (Exod. xiii.), she presented her Son, the first-born of the whole creation, by whom all things were made, both visible and invisible, to His eternal Father. Parents, learn to imitate this presentation, by making an offering of your children to God, by the hands of Mary, to be dedicated for ever to His love and service. Christians, learn to present Him with your hearts, together with their offspring, your thoughts, words, and deeds; learn to make an offering to Him of your whole being, every day and hour of your life. But you must not stop here; you must also present to Him His Son Jesus Christ, and yourselves with Him, and through Him daily in the sacred mysteries, and hourly in the spiritual temple of your souls. The temple of God in Jerusalem was highly honoured on this day, by the presence of the Son of God, according to that prophecy of Aggeus, ii. 8, 10, "The desired of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. Great shall be the glory of this last house more than of the first, saith the Lord of Hosts . . . and in this place I will give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts." My soul, art thou not ambitious of a share in this glory, peace, and happiness? Invite, then, this same Son of God, the desired of all nations, into thy inward house, and He will come and make thee the temple of His glory, and bring thee His true peace, which will make thee happy indeed.

3. Consider that on this day the venerable Simeon, who had received a promise from the Holy Ghost that he should see the Saviour of the world before he died, coming by divine instinct into the temple, whilst our Lord was there, took Him into his arms, and declared Him to be the promised Messiah, the glory of Israel, and the light of all nations. At the same time that holy widow, Anna the prophetess, who for a number of years had waited on the Lord in His temple by continual prayer and fasting, was favoured with the like grace, and made public profession of her faith in our infant Saviour. This sacred meeting of so many persons of such eminent sanctity in the temple of God, in company with the Son of God and His Blessed Mother, the Church celebrates in the procession of this day, which we make with lighted candles in our hands, which are solemnly blessed in the name of Christ, and received from the hand of God's

priests as emblems of the light of Christ. See, Christian souls, with what affection and devotion you ought to receive, and bear in your hands, those hallowed candles, as figures of Christ. Learn, from holy Simeon, to seek Christ alone, to sigh after Him, to aspire with your whole souls after His embrace, despising all things else, that you may find Him. Remember that He is the true light of the world, in His life and doctrine; and determine from this time forward ever to follow Him.

Conclusion. Study well the lessons which are to be learned from the presentation of the Son of God and the purification of His Blessed Mother, and conform yourselves to them in the practice of your lives; that so, being purified from all your sins, you may be worthy to be one day presented to God in the eternal temple of His glory.

FEBRUARY 3.

On the parable of the labourers in the vineyard (St. Matt. xx.).

FOR SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

1. Consider that on this day we enter upon a time of devotion and penance by way of preparation for the solemn fast of Lent, and therefore we are called upon by the Church, both in the Epistle and in the Gospel of the Sunday, to begin, now at least, to be in earnest in the great concerns of our soul. In the Epistle, we are put in mind by St. Paul (1 Cor. ix. 24, &c.) that we are running in a race, in which we must push forward, with all our power, or we shall lose the prize; that we are engaged in a conflict for an incorruptible crown, which is not to be obtained without much labour and self-denial. That if we are not in earnest, notwithstanding all the distinguished favours we have received from God, we shall be in great danger of being excluded, like the Israelites, from the true land of promise. In the parable of the Gospel we are put in mind that we have but one business in this world, represented under the figure of labouring in the vineyard of our Lord; that in this labour we are to spend the short day of our mortal life, and by persevering in it until night, are to secure to our souls the wages of a happy eternity. Let us attend well, that we may learn these great lessons!

2. Consider, in the parable of this day's Gospel, the infinite goodness of God, manifested to us in every age, since the beginning of the world, and in every part of the life of man, by which we are invited by His divine graces and calls, to go out to hire and send labourers into His vineyard. After all, what need has He of our labour, or of what service can we be to Him? What can we give Him, which He does not first give to us? Why, then, does He press us to labour in His vineyard? It is out of

pure goodness and love, that He may make us for ever happy by serving Him here, and enjoying Him hereafter. But what is the meaning of this vineyard of our Lord? and what is this labour that He calls for at our hands? "The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts," said the prophet Isaias (c. v. 7), "is the house of Israel," that is, the people of God. Yes, our own souls are the vineyard we are commanded to cultivate—no one can be excused from his share in this labour; everybody must, at least take care of one. To labour to the purpose, we must, in the first place, root out the poisonous weeds of sinful habits, and cut up the thorns and briars of our vices and passions, and then we must plant in their stead the good plants of Christian virtues, and cultivate them by proper care, till they are capable of bringing forth fruit that may answer the expectation of the Lord and Master of the vineyard. How happy shall we be, if by our labours, and His blessing, we so cultivate this little part of the Lord's vineyard that falls to our share, as to engage Him to come and recreate Himself with us there.

3. Consider, Christian souls, how early in the morning your good God invited you to work in His vineyard, by the early knowledge He gave you of Himself, and of the end for which He brought you into the world, and how frequently He has pressed you by repeated graces and calls, in every part of your life, to oblige you to set about this work in good earnest. But can you say you have yet begun? May He not justly reproach you, as He did those whom He found standing in the market-place at the eleventh hour, "Why stand you here all the day idle?" Alas! are you not idle, when you are doing nothing to the purpose? And has not your whole life been hitherto little better than wasted? Nothing to answer the great end, the only business, for which you were made? Have you not been truly idle all the day, that is, all your life? Begin now, at least, to labour; perhaps this is your last hour, your day is far spent, the night is coming on "when no man can work" (John ix. 4). Work therefore now, whilst you have time, lest, being surprised by the night, you may have no more time to work in, and so starve for eternity.

Conclusion. Make good use of this fresh summons, by which you are called upon this day, by God and His Church, to go and labour in the vineyard of your soul; lest otherwise, by not corresponding with the call, and receiving the grace of God in vain, you verify in yourselves that sentence with which our Lord concludes the parable of this Sunday, "Many are called, but few are chosen."

FEBRUARY 4.

On the multitude of our Sins.

1. Consider, my soul, how long it is since thou wast first so miserable as to fall from thy God by sin, and how much thy sins have been multiplied since that unhappy hour. Alas! didst thou not, at thy first coming to the use of reason, forfeit thy baptismal innocence, and fall a prey to that hellish monster? It was thy indispensable duty, in consequence of thy creation, of thy redemption, and of thy baptismal engagements, to turn to God, as soon as thou wast capable of knowing Him, as to thy first beginning and last end, and to dedicate thyself eternally to His love and service. And didst thou comply with this strict obligation? Lucifer and his companions were cast headlong down into hell, because immediately after they were created, instead of turning to God, and dedicating themselves wholly to Him, as they were bound to do, they turned away from Him to take pride in themselves. Didst thou not imitate these rebels, at the first dawn of thy reason, by turning thy back upon God, and by preferring thy own irregular inclinations and every senseless toy before Him?

2. Consider how, after so wretched a beginning, thou hast gone on for so many years, daily adding sin to sin, against God, thy neighbour, and thyself, by work, by word, or by desire; so that not one day, perhaps not even one hour, has yet passed without frequent offences against God, either by commission or omission, by ignorance, frailty, or malice. Alas! my poor soul, is it not true that even from thy childhood, thou wast inclined to lies, passion, and impurity? Is it not true that even then thy thoughts went continually astray from God, after lying fooleries and vanities; that thy prayers were without attention; thy confessions without sincerity, repentance, or amendment; and thy whole life and conversation without any true sense of God, or of any solid good? And hast thou grown better by growing older? Or hast thou not rather daily multiplied thy sins; and still more and more corrupted and defiled all thy powers and faculties, and all thy senses and members, with repeated offences and treasons, and continually perverted and abused the gifts of God against the giver? Oh, pass over in thy mind, but let it be in the bitterness of thy soul, all thy years; and lament to find, that thy sins have been indeed more numerous than the hairs of thy head, besides an infinite multitude of hidden sins, or sins which thou hast occasioned in others, which keep out of sight at present, but will all one day appear against thee.

3. Consider, so as to make a better judgment of the immense number of thy offences and transgressions, how little thou hast complied, in any part of thy life, with the great duty of loving

God with thy whole heart; of dedicating thyself to His service, and of directing, by a pure intention, all thy thoughts, words, and actions to Him. How little restraint thou hast put upon thy natural inclinations, too strongly bent on evil, from thy very childhood; how little guard thou hast kept upon thy roving thoughts and imaginations; how little attention thou hast had, not to offend in words, nor to give occasion of offence to others. Reflect, also, how much of thy precious time thou has squandered away; how many graces thou hast received in vain; how little thou hast corresponded with divine calls and inspirations; how little use thou hast made of the talents with which thou hast been entrusted; and how very ill thou hast discharged thyself of thy stewardship, in every part of thy life. And then see what armies of sins will presently rise up before thy eyes, and stand staring thee in the face. And how wilt thou dare after so much guilt, and so much ingratitude, which is a perpetual aggravation of every one of thy sins, to lift up thy eyes any more to heaven, or so much as utter the holy name of God, which thou hast so often profaned?

Conclusion. Be always humbled, by a true sense and daily remembrance of thy innumerable sins; and offer up daily for them the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart; and embrace henceforward a penitential life, as thy best security after so much guilt.

FEBRUARY 5.

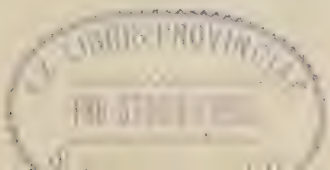
On the goodness of God in waiting for Sinners.

1. Consider the wonders of God's goodness in His dealings with sinners. See with what patience He bears with them, and often for a long time; notwithstanding their repeated provocations, and continual abuse of His bounty and mercy, and that infinite hatred He always bears to mortal sin wherever He sees it. O my soul, how much art thou indebted to this patience of thy God, in bearing with thee all these years past ever since thy first fall into sin! Alas! hast thou not all this time been playing upon the very brink of that dreadful precipice which leads to the bottomless pit? Hast thou not been all this while within a hair's breadth of a miserable eternity? Is it not true, that every night thou hast gone to bed, thou didst not know but that before the morning thou mightest find thyself in hell? Millions have fallen into that dungeon of endless woe, whilst thy God has spared thee; millions are now burning in those unquenchable flames for fewer sins than thou hast committed. Blessed to all eternity be the infinite goodness of my God, and may all His angels and saints praise and glorify Him for ever, for having endured me so long, for having preserved me and continually watched over me, else my soul had long since dwelt in hell.

2. Consider the many ways by which God seeks to reclaim sinners and to call them home to Him. Reflect on the remorse and inward reproaches of conscience, with which He visits them; the terror of His judgments, and the allurements of His mercies, which He sets before them. See how He is continually calling upon them, by His word, by His preachers, by good books, by good examples, and wholesome admonitions, and by a number of interior invitations and graces. Has He not dealt thus with thee, my soul, all this time thou hast been going astray from Him? And what is the meaning of all this goodness of thy God to such an undeserving, ungrateful, and obstinate rebel? It is nothing else but His own pure mercy and love in consideration of the precious blood of His Son. And shall not all this love of His for thee soften thy heart, and oblige thee, now at least, to resolve in good earnest to return to Him; lest otherwise, mercy, being long abused, should give place to justice, and the land which has been so often watered with rain from heaven, and still continues to bring forth nothing but thorns and briars, should fall at length under a dreadful curse, and be condemned to the fire? (Heb. vi.)

3. Consider what encouragement God gives to all sinners to return to Him. "As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of the sinner; but that he be converted from his ways, and live. Why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezech. xxxiii.) "Return to Me and live" (xviii.). "Thou hast gone astray after many lovers, but return to Me, and I will receive thee" (Jer. iii.). See with what love the good shepherd in the Gospel goes after the lost sheep, and with what joy he lays it upon his shoulders and brings it home to the fold! See how the father runs out to meet the prodigal child when he returns home from the husks of swine; see how he embraces him, clothes him with the best robe, and makes a feast for him (Luke xv.). Reflect how the Son of God, when here upon earth, treated the penitent Magdalene, the thief upon the cross, and all other sinners who had recourse to His mercy; and how He has declared that there is more joy in heaven over one penitent sinner than over ninety-nine just. And let all these instances and testimonies of His goodness to poor sinners encourage and determine you to stay no longer away from Him by sin, but to arise without delay and return, by a thorough conversion, to so good and so loving a Father.

Conclusion. Abuse no longer the mercy of God by continuing in sin, but return to Him now at least with thy whole heart, and never depart from Him any more.



FEBRUARY 6.

On turning from Sin to God.

1. Every wilful sinner is guilty of two enormous evils, according to that of Jer. ii. 12, 13: "Be astonished, O ye heavens; for My people have done two evils—they have forsaken Me. the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Yes, Christians, in every mortal sin there are always these two exceeding great evils, turning away from God infinitely good, and the very fountain of all goodness and life, and embracing in His stead that hellish monster, sin, through the allurement of some deceitful appearance of happiness, justly compared by the prophet to a broken cistern, that can hold no water, but only filth and mud. Wherefore, in the conversion of a sinner, there must be always two principal ingredients, opposed to those two great evils: turning away from sin, with horror, detestation, and sorrow, for having offended God, infinitely good in Himself, and infinitely good to us; and returning to God, to embrace his Holy law, and to dedicate the years that remain of life to His obedience, service, and love. Happy conversion that brings the poor sinner back, from the very worst of evils, to his sovereign good!

2. This turning away of the soul from sin, which is a necessary ingredient of the sinner's conversion, must be effectual, that is, the soul must turn away from her sins in reality; she must not content herself with a slight sorrow for them; nor with faint purposes of amendment, nor with a half will, nor yet with making some weak efforts towards beginning a new life. But she must renounce her sins with her whole heart; she must detest them above all evils; she must hate them even worse than hell; she must fly and abhor like a pestilence all such company, or other occasions, as may expose her to the danger of relapsing into them; she must be absolutely and resolutely determined never more to return to them, upon any consideration whatsoever. This is being penitent indeed; but to pretend to be true converts, without leaving our sins, is all mockery.

3. Consider that the principal act in the conversion of a sinner is turning to God with his whole heart, just as the principal ingredient of sin is turning away from Him. Wherefore the true convert must not only leave the husks of swine, which he has hitherto set his heart upon, but he must arise and return to the embraces of his Father, with a contrite and humble, but loving heart, resolved henceforward to be the eternal servant of His divine love. He must remember that "many sins are forgiven to him that loveth much" (Luke vii.), and that he who has been the greatest debtor is the most obliged to love with his

whole heart that merciful Creditor, who shows so much love to him in being ready to forgive him his great debts. In a word, a constant adhesion to God, by love and obedience, must be the perpetual business of a true convert. His whole life, for the time to come, must be dedicated and consecrated to divine love. This is his best security for the remission of all his past sins; this, the best preservative from sin for the future.

Conclusion. Show thyself to be a true convert from sin to God, by renouncing all thy criminal affections, and sacrificing them all to the love of God; by hating what thou hast hitherto loved, and embracing with thy whole soul thy Lord and Saviour crucified for the love of thee.

FEBRUARY 7

On the Sentiments of a Penitent Sinner.

1. Consider that, according to the different steps which are usually taken in the sinner's conversion, different sentiments and affections gradually take possession of his soul. And first, his faith which was asleep before, awakened by serious consideration, or by hearing the word of God, or by reading good books, opens his eyes to discover, in part at least, how odious, how filthy a monster has hitherto had possession of his soul, and what dreadful dangers have surrounded him with the worst of judgments from God, both for time and eternity. This, by the help of the Holy Ghost, produces in his soul a wholesome fear of the justice of God, and of that miserable death, judgment, and hell, which are daily overtaking unrepenting sinners. Now, this fear is usually the beginning of the greatest conversions. How hardened must that sinner be, whom neither the sight of the sword of God, hanging over his head, nor of a miserable death, following closely at his heels, nor of hell, open under his feet, and just ready to swallow him down, can move to repentance.

2. The sinner, being alarmed with the terrors of divine justice, seeks to find how he may escape these dreadful evils, which threaten him continually on every side, and how he may rid himself of his sins, the true source of all these evils. And here the mercy and goodness of God, and the precious blood of the Son of God shed for poor sinners, present themselves before the eyes of his soul, and encourage him to hope that the same God, whose mercy has endured him so long in his sins, whose goodness has watched over him all this while, preserving him from innumerable evils, and loading him with innumerable benefits, who has purchased this soul of his for Himself at so dear a rate, and who has shed His own blood to wash him from these very sins, will certainly receive him now he desires to return to Him. This is but according to His repeated promises made to repenting sinners,

and as He has received millions of others who have returned to Him after sin. And in this hope he firmly purposes to neglect no one thing, required on his part, towards obtaining the absolution and full remission of all his sins, and a perfect reconciliation with God.

3. The sinner being thus encouraged, and resolved to present himself before the throne of divine grace, and there to sue for the pardon of his sins, through the precious blood of the Son of God, betakes himself to fervent prayer, in order to obtain the necessary disposition of a contrite and humble heart, without which there is no admittance to mercy and grace. This contrite and humble heart is an excellent composition of three great virtues—penance, humility, and divine love. Penance fills the soul with a horror and deep sense of sorrow for sin committed, together with an ardent desire to be rid of it; humility obliges the soul to condemn herself, by reason of her manifold crimes, as worthy of all manner of evil, and unworthy of the least good, and to sit down in the lowest place, as the most wretched, ungrateful, and abominable of creatures; and divine love teaches her to consider and detest in her sins, not so much the evil they bring upon her, as their infinite malice, from the infinite opposition they have to God, infinitely good in Himself, and infinitely good to her, and their enormous outrages against the Son of God, incarnate for the love of her. With these sentiments the true penitent endeavours to prepare and dispose himself for the confession of his sins, and absolution from them. And this is that "contrite and humble heart, which God never despises" (Ps. l.).

Conclusion. If thou wouldst effectually turn from sin to God, endeavour to walk in these steps, especially to meditate seriously upon the great truths which relate to eternity, and labour with all thy power to acquire a contrite and humble heart.

FEBRUARY 8.

On doing Penance for our Sins.

1. Consider that sentence of our Lord (Luke xiii. 5), "Except you do penance, you shall all perish." The virtue of penance always was, is, and ever will be, absolutely necessary for every soul, that has at any time in life fallen from God by wilful sin. It is the only plank that can save after the shipwreck made of innocence. "Aut pœnitendum aut ardendum," says an ancient father—"Either penance or hell-fire;" there is no medium for wilful sinners, they must choose one of the two. Sin must be punished either here or hereafter, either by the penitent sinner or by divine justice. Hence the preaching of penance to such as had fallen from God by sin, was the great subject of the commission of the prophets in the Old Testament, and of the apostles

and all apostolic preachers in the New. Hence it was by preaching penance, and the necessity of bringing forth worthy fruits of penance, that St. John the Baptist was to prepare the people for Christ (Matt. iv.), and our Lord Himself opened His mission with the same theme (Matt. iv.). Thus there can be no means of reaching God and a happy eternity but by the way of innocence, or, when we have strayed from this, by the way of penance.

2. This virtue of penance requires of us not only that we should turn from sin to God, by a change of heart, and by a change of life, but also that we should labour to make satisfaction to the divine justice, by voluntary mortification of the flesh, and other penitential exercises, for all the injuries and affronts we have offered Him by our sins, and thus endeavour to discharge, according to our weak ability, the debt we owe to God. This is properly doing penance for our sins; this is what divine justice always expects, and what the Church of God has always called for from penitent sinners. We cannot be true penitents without hating and detesting our sins above all evils, because they offend a God infinitely good. Now this, of necessity, involves a hatred for this traitorous self-love of ours, and for all its irregular inclinations and passions, as enemies of God and the soul, and especially a hatred for this sinful flesh, which is so apt to betray us into this dreadful evil of sin. And hence, again, naturally flows, in all true penitents, a sincere and effectual desire of punishing themselves for their sins, a desire of chastising this flesh by penitential exercises, and thereby doing their best to make satisfaction for their sins. This is, and ever was, one necessary ingredient of that virtue of penance, without which the sinner can never be reconciled to an offended God.

3. Consider how much this way of doing penance for our sins is inculcated in Holy Writ, where we are so often put in mind of turning to God with fasting, weeping, and mourning, of doing penance in sackcloth and ashes, and the like; and where we meet with divers instances of the mercy and favour God is pleased to show to all such as exercise themselves in these voluntary mortifications and humiliations of the flesh, when they are accompanied, as they ought to be, with a penitential spirit. Here also we learn, that no assurance we can possibly have of the remission of our sins is to exempt us from doing penance for them, when we see that King David, notwithstanding the prophet had assured him that "the Lord had taken away his sin" (2 Sam. xii. 13), yet still continued to do penance for it, as we find by his penitential psalms: which inform us that his sin was always before him; that he washed every night his couch with his tears; that he laboured in his groans; that he mingled ashes with his bread, and tears with his drink. Let us imitate this glorious penitent.

Conclusion. If thou wouldst be a true friend to thy own soul, be

not afraid of hurting this sinful flesh, which is thy greatest enemy; but keep it in subjection, by voluntary mortification, and chastise it for its past misdemeanours by penitential austerities.

FEBRUARY 9.

On the manner of doing Penance for our Sins.

1. The true manner of doing penance for our sins is not to be learned from the maxims or from the common practice of the children of this world, who fear nothing so much as hurting themselves, or contradicting their own humours, appetites, and inclinations; and therefore this bringing forth fruits worthy of penance is to them a hard saying, which they cannot endure to hear. But the true manner of doing penance for sin is to be learned from the children of light, that is, from the doctrine and practice of the saints, who, as they had quite other ideas of the evil of sin than worldlings have, so also they had a very different way of thinking and of acting in regard to penance; as they have demonstrated by the penitential austerities, to which they condemned themselves all their lifetime, for expiation of the punishment due to their sins. What are so many religious orders in the Church of God, in which so many thousands of both sexes, retiring from the world, dedicate themselves to daily mortification and penance, but so many standing memorials and living instances of that true manner of doing penance, with which the Spirit of God usually inspires those whom He convinces of sin, that is to say, whom He makes sensible of the heinousness of the evil of sin, and how much ought to be done for the expiation of it?

2. Consider how the Holy Spirit dictated to the ancient Church those rules and ordinances, commonly called the penitential canons, which were in force for many hundred years, by which penitent sinners were subjected to divers fasts and humiliations, for three, seven, ten, and sometimes fifteen years, or more, for one mortal sin, and yet did not think they did too much. How ought this to convince sinners that there is something more to be done for the remission of their sins than they have hitherto been aware of! For, though according to the modern discipline of the Church, those penitential canons are not now enforced, yet as God is still the same, and sin is still as heinous in His eyes as it was in former ages, so the sinner stands no less indebted to the divine justice now than formerly, and therefore ought to think upon discharging this debt, in the best manner he is able, by frequent fasting and other bodily mortifications, as well as by alms-deeds and long-continued prayer.

3. There are three particular practices of penance which ought never to be forgotten by such as have, at any time in life, been

guilty of mortal sin. The first and principal is, that they should go daily in spirit to the feet of Christ to wash them with penitential tears, flowing from a loving heart, and there earnestly beg pardon for all their past offences through His precious blood. The second, which will naturally flow from the first, is that, having their sins always before their eyes, they should daily offer up to God, in penance for them, some voluntary mortifications of their own will, honour, or appetite, at least in lesser things, if they have not the courage or strength to undertake greater; for instance, that they should in this spirit rise early in the morning, retrench superfluities in eating, drinking, sleeping, and diversions, and mortify upon every occasion their vanity, curiosity, and sensuality. The third is, that they should offer up daily for their sins, in a penitential spirit, all the labours to which their state of life is exposed, with all the pains and sufferings of every kind, which they may have to endure in life or death, to be united to, and sanctified by, the labours and sufferings of the Son of God, considering themselves all the while as under a course of penance laid on them by the Almighty for their sins, and going through it with humility, patience, and courage. Whosoever shall diligently persevere in the practice of these three things, will be accounted one day as true penitents, and receive the crown of true penitents, though their circumstances of life, strength, or health may not have admitted of any other penitential austerities. But no condition of life, or other circumstances whatsoever, ought to dispense any sinner from these three most easy and most wholesome exercises of penance.

Conclusion. Resolve to do penance for thy sins, in the best manner thou art able, whilst thou hast time before thee, lest otherwise thou be surprised and overtaken by the night, and mayest then wish in vain to have done penance, when time shall be no more.

FEBRUARY 10.

On the Parable of the Sower (Luke viii.); *being the Gospel for Sexagesima Sunday.*

1. Consider, in this parable, the infinite riches of the goodness and bounty of the Son of God, who, without distinction or respect of persons, sows so plentifully the seed of His word, and of His graces, on all kinds of soils. This seed is heavenly, it is capable of producing fruit an hundredfold, He is the sower, and waters with rain from heaven the seed He has sown, and yet three parts in four of this divine seed are lost for want of a correspondence in the soil. Christian, see in what manner you receive the seed of God's word, see how you correspond with the divine graces and calls; your eternal salvation is at stake. If you bring forth

good fruit, the result of this divine seed, you shall live on it for endless ages in the kingdom of heaven; but if you suffer the soil of your soul to be like a beaten highway, or like a rock covered with a thin surface of earth, or like ground overrun with thorns and briars, the seed of God will be lost upon you, and you will be answerable for the loss of it, and miserable for all eternity.

2. Consider what is meant by the highway, where the seed is trodden under foot, or picked up by the birds; and see how justly such souls are compared to a highway or beaten path, as live in forgetfulness of God, and in continual dissipation of thought, so as to become a mere thoroughfare for every passenger that pleases, that is, for every idle amusement that offers itself, for every impertinent or sinful imagination, without any sense at all of the fear of God, or any care to keep off those wicked spirits, signified by the birds, which are ever upon the watch to snatch away this divine seed of God's word, that lies thus unregarded on the surface of the soul. But what is the remedy for this evil? No other, be sure, than to plough up this ground that has hitherto been made a highway; to fence it in, so that passengers may have no longer liberty to be continually trampling it under foot; and to harrow it, so that the seed may be covered by the earth, and lie no longer exposed to be a prey to the birds. For a highway or beaten path, so long as it remains such, can never bring forth fruit. Now, in the spiritual sense, we plough up the soil of the soul by daily meditation upon eternal truths; we fence it in by a spirit of recollection; and we preserve the divine seed, which is to make it fruitful, from our spiritual enemies, by letting it sink deep into our souls, and guarding it by watching and prayer.

3. Consider who they are that are meant by the rock or stony ground, where there is no depth of earth, nor proper moisture to nourish the seed, so as to bring the fruit to maturity; viz., such souls as receive indeed the word of God, and are moved by it to make some good resolutions, and some slender efforts towards bringing forth the fruits of a new life; but the rock of their old bad habits (which they have never heartily renounced) hinders the seed from taking root: their resolutions are but superficial, they do not sink in deep enough to reach or change the heart, but upon the first opposition or temptation they wither away and die. The remedy here must be, to procure that this rock may be softened, by means of long continued application to mental prayer and other spiritual exercises; till those old habits are brought to give way to the fear and love of God, which are capable of breaking even the rock in pieces and changing it into fruitful soil.

Conclusion. Resolve to be ever attentive to the gracious calls of the word of God, and of His heavenly inspirations, and to let this divine seed sink deep into thy soul by daily meditation.

FEBRUARY 11.

On the remaining part of the Parable of the Sower.

1. Consider that there remains a third kind of soil, which brings no fruit to maturity, viz., the thorny ground, which receives indeed the seed of the divine word, but suffers it not to grow up and ripen, but overpowers it, and chokes it with the thorns which are its natural produce, and which have taken a much stronger root therein. By the thorny ground are meant they who hear the word of God, or are otherwise favoured with the visits of His graces and calls, but are so unhappy as to suffer all this heavenly seed to be overpowered and choked up with their carnal affections and lusts, or, as our Saviour says, "with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and so yield no fruit" (Luke viii. 14). See, my soul, if this be not thy misfortune. Reflect how often thou hast been visited with graces from heaven, how often thou hast heard or read the word of God, and what fruit this divine seed has hitherto produced in thee! It is well, if it has not been rendered absolutely fruitless, if not pernicious to thee, by the thorns of thy disorderly affections to the things of this world, which thou hast loved more than God.

2. "Thorny ground" can never bring any fruit to perfection, except the thorns be first rooted up; for, since they are much stronger than the corn, and have taken a deeper root in this unhappy soil (in consequence of the curse laid upon our earth by occasion of sin, Gen. iii. 17, 18), so long as they are suffered to occupy the ground, they will, of course, overpower and choke up the good grain. Wherefore, if we desire to bring forth fruit, and that the seed of the word and of the grace of God should not be lost upon us, we must seriously apply our souls to rooting out these thorns of our irregular affections to worldly toys and sensual pleasures; for, as long as these are predominant in our souls, the seed of heaven will bring forth no fruit. Now, rooting out these thorns is the proper business of the virtue of self-denial; that is, of the daily mortification of our passions and natural inclinations, which are ever prone to evil, and, if not kept under, hurry the soul into all kinds of vice, and stifle all the graces and inspirations of heaven. This, then, must be the care of every Christian; this our daily labour, to keep these thorns under, that they may not overpower the seed of the word and of the grace of God in our souls. And whatever we affect or love, to the prejudice of the love of God or of our duty to Him, we must look upon as thorns, and remove from our souls, as mortal enemies to the seed of heaven, and to our true welfare, either for time or eternity.

3. The Christian must endeavour to be like the good ground,

in which the seed of God's word yieldeth fruit an hundredfold, that is, he must labour to be of the number of those who with a good and perfect heart hear the word, and keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience. He must hear it with a good heart; not out of idle curiosity, but for his own instruction and edification; not carp at it or criticise it, but let it sink into his soul, for the reformation of his life. He must hear it with a perfect heart, embracing it as the word and truth of God, brought to him from heaven by the Son of God, and designed to carry him to heaven. He must keep it, by laying it up carefully in his mind and often meditating upon it; he must ever follow its light, and regulate his steps by it. He must bring forth fruit from it, by exercising himself daily in those virtues which it recommends, and advancing continually, by its direction, in the love of God and in the way of Christian perfection; and this fruit he must bring forth in patience, that is, with constancy and perseverance, notwithstanding all the difficulties and opposition he will be sure to meet with from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Conclude to rid thy soul of all the thorns that may hinder it from bringing forth fruit to God, that thou mayest be the good ground and yield a hundredfold.

FEBRUARY 12.

Against delay of Repentance.

1. Consider that of all the tricks of Satan, by which he deludes unhappy souls to their eternal ruin, there is none more common or more dangerous than this by which he persuades them to put off their repentance and conversion to God from time to time, till there is no more time for them. Alas! thousands and millions of poor souls have been thus betrayed into that bottomless pit of never-ending woe, where the worm never dies, and the fire is never extinguished, who thought as little of damning themselves, or of dying in their sins, as any now living; but by putting off their conversion, they went on provoking the divine justice, till by a just judgment of God they were cut off when they least expected it; and, dying as they lived, were justly sentenced to that second and everlasting death. Unhappy wretches, who would not believe the just Judge who so often warned them to watch, and assured them that otherwise He would surprise them, like a thief in the night, when they least expected Him. Alas! how dreadful and how common are these judgments!

2. Consider the insupportable affront that sinners offer to the Divine Majesty, when, being invited and pressed by His heavenly graces to a reconciliation with their offended God, they put Him off till another time, shut their ears to His sweet calls, and

refuse Him entrance to their hearts where He stands and knocks. Alas! if He withdraw Himself, they are undone for ever; and how dare they treat Him with such contempt? Is it not infinite goodness in Him, to have already suffered them so long in their sins, to have restrained the sword of His justice from falling upon their guilty heads, to have kept them so long out of hell, hanging as they are all the while over this bottomless pit, and supported only by a slender thread of life, which He holds in His hand? Is it not inexpressible condescension in His Divine Majesty, after their repeated treasons, to allow them any conditions of peace and reconciliation at all? How much more to call after them, when they are running away from Him, and to press them so earnestly to return to Him, when He has no need at all of them, but seeks only their welfare? What, then, ought they not to apprehend from His justice, if they still refuse His offers of mercy and slight His graces and calls? Can any punishment be too great for such insolence, so much obstinacy, and for so much ingratitude? Let them give ear to His threats by the mouth of the wise man (Prov. i.), "Because I have called, and you have refused to hear, I have stretched out My hand, and you would not regard Me; you have despised all My counsels, and neglected My reprehensions, therefore I will also laugh at your destruction, and will mock when that which you feared shall come upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, and I will not hear," &c.

3. Consider the monstrous presumption the sinner is guilty of, in wilfully persisting in sin upon the confidence of a future conversion. Wretch that he is, how dare he pretend to dispose of the time to come, when he is not master of one moment of it? Or how has he the assurance to promise himself greater graces hereafter, than those he abuses at present? Does he not know that God alone is the master both of time and grace, and that He has promised neither the time nor grace of a true conversion hereafter, to any of those who put off their repentance at the present; so far from it, He has often signified to such presumptuous sinners that they shall have neither the time nor the effectual grace which they promised themselves, but that they shall be surprised and die in their sins? According to that of the wise man (Eccles. v. 8, 9), "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for His wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance He shall destroy thee."

Conclusion. Never expose thy dear soul, by any delays, to the dreadful danger of dying in thy sins; but if at any time thou hast reason to apprehend thou hast lost the grace of God by sin, use thy best endeavours to be reconciled out of hand. It is a dreadful thing to be an enemy to God, though it were for only one night; that night may be your last, therefore never venture to lie down to sleep under the guilt of mortal sin.

FEBRUARY 13.

On the folly of deferring our Conversion to God.

1. Consider how foolish it is for the sinner, when called, invited, and pressed by the best of Fathers to return to Him, to choose rather to continue a slave to Satan, to feed his swine, and to prefer the husks of swine, which can never satisfy him, before his Father's table, and the happy liberty of the children of God! Ah! poor wretch, open thy eyes and see how strangely thou art deluded! Thy God proffers thee His mercy, His grace, His favour, the honour of being His child, His spouse, His temple, of having a share in His heavenly treasures, His peace, His comforts, His table, His kingdom, His Holy Spirit, in a word, Himself and all that is good; and thou art so blind, and so mad, as to desire Him to keep all His favours for another time, and to make choice for thyself at present of the extremity of all misery, by preferring to go on yet a while under the dreadful guilt of mortal sin, a wretched slave to Satan, sin, and hell. Can any madness be compared to this?

2. How vain and foolish are those pretexts by which sinners suffer themselves to be imposed upon, when they defer their conversion to God, especially with regard to pretended difficulties in the undertaking, which would all be put to flight, and vanish away, if they would but once heartily set their hand to the work. But what is the most common delusion is, that they vainly imagine they will do it more easily another time. A dreadful delusion indeed! since both reason and daily experience must make it evident, that the longer this work is deferred, the harder it is to bring it about. And how should it be otherwise, since by these delays, and by continuing to add sin to sin, their sinful habits grow daily stronger upon them, and consequently harder to be rooted out; the devil's power over them daily increases; and the Almighty, provoked by their repeated abuses of His grace, and their obstinate impenitence, withdraws Himself further and further from them, and suffers them by degrees to fall into that blindness and hardness of heart, which, of all evils, is the most difficult to be cured.

3. Consider the folly of all such as put off their conversion to God, through the dread of confessing their sins, and choose to suffer for a long time the gnawing worm of a guilty conscience, with the other evils that always attend on mortal sin, and to be continually exposed to the danger of death and hell, and the judgments of an offended God, rather than undergo a small confusion that would last but one moment, and would immediately be followed by unspeakable comfort, and by peace, reconciliation, and grace. Would not all the world accuse that person of the

greatest folly and madness, who, labouring under a painful and mortal distemper, should refuse an easy, safe, and sovereign remedy, only because it was disagreeable to the palate just for the moment of taking it? But oh, how much more unaccountable is the folly and madness of the sinner, who for fear of so small a humiliation, as the confession of his sins to a minister of God, tied by the laws both of God and man to eternal secrecy, refuses all the medicines of heaven under a mortal disease, which is hurrying him on towards eternal death, and chooses rather to risk his all for eternity, than to discover his illness to his physician?

Conclusion. Do not suffer the enemy to impose upon thee with any of his deceitful wiles, so as to induce thee to continue playing upon the brink of a precipice, with the sword of God hanging over thy head. No prudent person would refuse to be immediately reconciled to a man whom he had offended, who had the power and authority to condemn him to a cruel death for his offence; how much less should the sinner put off his reconciliation with an offended God, who can in an instant cast both his body and soul into hell, and who is highly provoked by his impenitence.

FEBRUARY 14.

On deathbed Performances.

1. If it be so great an evil to defer, for any considerable time, one's conversion to God and one's reconciliation with Him, it must be an evil incomparably greater to form the premeditated design of putting it off to the end of our lives, upon the confidence of a deathbed repentance; because the risk, the presumption, the madness, the outrage, offered to God in this case is incomparably greater. It is well, if one in a thousand of those who are guilty of the formal design of putting a cheat upon the Divine Justice, who indulge themselves in sin all their lifetime, and then only think to make their peace with God when they can sin no longer, ever meet with even the poor chance of a deathbed confession, much less with the grace of an effectual conversion. Oh no! such sinners will find to their loss that "God is not mocked" (Gal. vi. 7). The general rule is, that "what a man soweth the same shall he reap," and that as man lives so shall he die — a rule so general, that in the whole Scripture we have but one instance of a happy death after a wicked life, that of the good thief; an example so singular in all its circumstances, as to afford no kind of encouragement to such sinners, as design beforehand to give the slip to God's justice by a deathbed conversion.

2. Consider how very little the sinner is capable of doing on his deathbed towards his conversion; when either the dulness and stupidity caused by his sickness, or by the quality of the

medicines, or the pains and agonies which he endures in body or mind, render him quite unfit for prayer, and incapable of attention to reading, or of any serious application of his thoughts to the great business of the soul. Alas! if a little headache or other slight indisposition be enough to hinder us at any time from making any serious meditation, or praying with devotion, how much less shall we be able to attend to prayer, or to do anything else to the purpose, when we shall be surprised by a mortal illness and by the pangs of death? O Christians! let not yourselves, then, be imposed upon with vain imaginations of the fine acts of contrition, and of the love of God, that you will make upon your deathbed; they will all fly away from you then; it is well if you be then capable of even one good thought. Thousands that have flattered themselves with the thought of doing fine things upon their deathbed, have been prevented by sudden death; thousands have been deprived of their senses before they apprehended their danger; thousands have been flattered by those about them into the belief that they were not dying, when they really were; and, what is most common of all, thousands, in punishment of forgetting God in their lifetime, have been suffered to forget themselves in death: and thus, generally speaking, these fine projects of death-bed performances turn to smoke and end in hell.

3. Consider that the conversion of an habitual sinner is at any time a very difficult task, and requires a strong grace; such as may reach and change the heart, and effectually turn it from the affection for sin to the love of God, so as to make it hate, above all evils, what has been for a long time a second nature, by the force of evil habit; and to love and embrace with the whole soul what has hitherto been loathed or despised. But if this task be difficult at all times, and seldom brought to effect without long and serious meditation and much prayer, what a poor chance must there be for such sinners, as have on set purpose put off this work to the time in which they are capable neither of meditation nor prayer, and, what is worst of all, when, in punishment of their obstinate impenitence and insupportable presumption, God has withdrawn Himself from them? Alas! poor sinner, thou didst flatter thyself in thy sins that it would be easy for thee at any time, how late soever, to make thy peace with God and escape hell, because thou hadst heard that in whatsoever hour the sinner shall turn to God, He will show him mercy; but then the devil hid from thy eyes that this effectual turning to God, especially upon a deathbed, must be the fruit of an extraordinary grace of God, which He has promised to no man, yea a very great miracle of grace, which He is seldom disposed to work in favour of such presumptuous wretches, as have made a practice all their lifetime of mocking Him.

Conclusion. Have no dependence upon the deathbed performance of habitual sinners, no, not even though, like Antiochus, they should shed tears plentifully ; such are often influenced by the fear of death, more than the love of God. Take thou care of one at least, by living always for thy own part, as thou desirest to die, and exhort all who belong to thee, to secure their souls by this same method ; it is the only safe way.

FEBRUARY 15.

On the dispositions with which we are to enter upon the Service of God (from Eccles.).

1. Consider and diligently attend to these words of the wise man, Eccles. ii. 1, "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice, and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation ;" and learn from these prescriptions of the Holy Ghost to enter upon the service of God, with a strong resolution not to be discouraged by the opposition thou shalt meet with from the world, the flesh, and the devil ; and with a determination to stand thy ground in this spiritual warfare, like a valiant soldier ; putting on the armour of Christian justice, and of the fear of God : according to that of the Apostle, Eph. vi. 13, &c., "Take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth (that is, with sincerity in your intention towards God), and having on the breastplate of justice (that is, Christian virtue, with a full determination, at all events, to be true to your God), in all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one (by a lively sense of God and eternity) ; and take unto you the helmet of salvation (that is, an humble confidence in God), and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (by frequently hearing, reading, or meditating on divine truths). And being thus prepared for the fight, you will not fail to gain the victory.

2. Consider what the wise man further prescribes to all who desire to succeed in this glorious enterprise, which is to bring us to God, to eternal life. "Humble thy heart," says he, "and endure" (that is, suppress and keep under all the irregular risings of thy pride and passion, that shall offer to oppose thy undertaking) : "wait on God with patience, join thyself to God and endure, that thy life may be increased in the latter end. Take all that shall be brought upon thee, and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience. For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation." Excellent lessons, not only for beginners, but for all who are on their journey towards heaven ! For crosses, sufferings, and humiliations

are the portion of all the servants of God; and patience and courage in adversities, humbling ourselves under the hand of God, and perfect resignation to His holy will, serve to qualify all our afflictions, and to make them light and easy, as well as infinitely advantageous to our souls. Oh how happy are they who have learned what it is to join themselves to God, in all they have to suffer! What happiness is to be found in enduring in His company, and with entire conformity to His blessed will. What an increase will this give to our life in the end, by adding to it a happy eternity!

3. Consider that one of the most excellent dispositions for attaining to all good, and the most effectual means to begin well, to advance daily, and continue to the end in the happy service of God, is to conceive, and nourish in the soul, a great esteem for a virtuous and devout life, an earnest desire of being good, a hunger and thirst after Christian justice, in a word, an ardent love for true wisdom, which indeed is no other than the knowledge, love, and service of God. "I wished," says the wise man (Wisd. vii. 7), "and understanding was given me; and I called, and the Spirit of wisdom came upon me; and I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison with her; I loved her above health and beauty, and all good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands. For she is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God." How glorious are the things that are said, both here and in many other passages of the divine oracles, of this heavenly wisdom! How lovely, how desirable, is this treasure, this precious pearl of virtue and devotion, which is the truest wisdom! Who would not give all things else to purchase such an inestimable jewel? But behold the wisest of men, yea, the Spirit of God by him, assures us that we need but desire it, seek it, and love it with all our hearts, and it shall be our own.

Conclusion. Observe all these heavenly lessons, and they will surely bring thee to God. He earnestly desires to make thee happy by making thee His true servant; if thou desirest the same, how canst thou fail, provided thy desire be fervent and persevering?

FEBRUARY 16.

On true Devotion.

1. A devout life is indeed the most happy of lives, and the most secure way to eternal life. For true devotion is the very perfection of charity and love; she is the queen of virtues. But beware, my soul, of the error of such false devotees, as make devotion consist in certain external exercises, destitute of the internal spirit; in hurrying over a number of prayers, in frequent fasts,

disciplines, or hair shirts ; or in giving alms, or in frequenting the sacraments ; or in following other religious practices, which happen to be agreeable to their inclinations ; though they remain all the while unmortified in their passions, full of self-love, and void of all true charity, either to God, or to their neighbour ; whereas true devotion cannot be without keeping all the commandments, but more especially those two, of loving God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves.

2. Consider that to be truly devout, is to give one's self to God, according to the original meaning of the word devotion, which signifies dedication and consecration of one's self to God. So that true devotion consists in always seeking God, and tending to Him, in embracing in all things His holy will, and ever loving and obeying His holy law. He who does this, is truly devout ; but he who does not love the will of God, better than his own humour, is not devout, although he pray all day long, and shed floods of tears. Consequently, he who is a slave to any of his passions, he who entertains rancour to any one of his neighbours, he who sets his heart upon the world, and its toys, more than God, can never be truly devout, because he wants the very foundation of true devotion, which is loving God above all things. As to those other things mentioned above, they are the attendants of true devotion, or its effects ; but then devotion does not consist in any of them, and they may often be found in such as have no true devotion, no true charity, nor even true faith, "without which no one can please God" (Heb. xi 6).

3. True devotion is not always sensible, nor does it consist in certain sensible tendernesses, which some people experience in prayer ; whilst others, who perhaps in the sight of God are much better Christians, meet with nothing for a long time but dryness and desolation. Some persons are of a more soft and tender nature, and are easily affected even unto tears, and yet withal are very superficial in the love of God ; quickly forget their good resolutions of serving Him ; easily yield in time of temptation, shrink under every cross, and never arrive at solid virtue ; and where is their devotion all this while, since it dries up, like their tears, in a moment, and brings forth no fruit ? How much more devout is that Christian, who remains constant in prayer, although he finds no sensible comfort therein ; who goes not to prayer to seek his own pleasure, but to please his God, and to glorify Him ; who is willing to take up the cross, and to help His Saviour in the carriage of His cross, by bearing, for the love of Him, the dryness and desolation he endures, without leaving his accustomed exercises : in a word, whose prayer is conformity of his own will to the will of God ! This is devotion indeed ; but sensible consolations, without this conformity, deserve not the name of devotion.

Conclusion. Make no account of any feeling of devotion, that

is not accompanied by charity, humility, and conformity to the will of God, and thou wilt be sure not to be imposed upon, as great numbers have been, by false appearances, and phantoms of devotion, to the danger of the loss of their precious souls.

FEBRUARY 17.

On the opposition there is between the World and the Gospel.

FOR SHROVE-TIDE.

1. Consider that it is not for nothing that the Son of God, in the Gospel, so often declares against the world, as the capital enemy of Him and His; because light and darkness are not more opposite than the world and the Gospel. The maxims and practices of the one are quite contradictory to the other. The world perpetually recommends what the Gospel condemns, and condemns what the Gospel recommends. The world is made up of pride, ambition, and vainglory; the Gospel breathes nothing but humility, self-contempt, choosing the lowest place, and becoming as little children; assuring us that otherwise there is no heaven for us. The world inspires a covetous spirit, the love of Mammon and fondness for worldly toys; the Gospel inculcates the necessity of despising all these things, and of quitting all things, at least in affection, to follow Christ. The world is a slave to sensual pleasures, and places its whole happiness in gratifying and indulging its own humours and inclinations; the Gospel requires, as the very first and most necessary condition to be a disciple of Christ, that we should deny ourselves, hate our own humours and inclinations, and take up our cross, and follow Him. The world imagines them blessed, that abound the most with worldly honours, riches, delicacies, pastimes, and other worldly enjoyments, and have no one to thwart or contradict them. The Gospel, on the contrary, pronounces them blessed that are poor in this world, that suffer injuries and affronts with meekness, that weep and mourn, and that are reviled and persecuted by men. In a word, the life of worldlings is a perpetual contradiction to the Gospel of Christ; and the life of Christ, and of all the true children of the Gospel, is a perpetual censure of the world and its maxims. See, my soul, which thou hadst rather follow, the world or the Gospel; the broad way, or the narrow; the way of perdition, or the way of life?

2. Christianity never had a more dangerous enemy than the world; and never yet suffered half so much from all the persecutions of infidels who have been from the beginning, as it continually suffers from false brethren, who, under the Christian name, are perpetually undermining the Gospel of Christ, and promoting the kingdom of Satan. The persecution of infidels made innumerable saints, and served very much to purify, and to propagate

the Church and kingdom of Christ; whereas, this war, that is continually carried on by wicked Christians, against the morals and maxims of the Gospel, draws away innumerable souls from Christ, corrupts the innocence even of the best inclined, and enslaves them to Satan and sin, and condemns them to hell. Let us beware of this mortal enemy of our salvation, this torrent of worldly custom, these pernicious maxims of a deluded and deluding world.

3. Consider with relation to this very time of Shrove-tide, how wide a distance there is between the true spirit of Christianity, and the practice of the children of this world. The Church sets aside this time for devotion and penance, that it may be a suitable preparation for the solemn fast of Lent; therefore she puts on her penitential attire, she calls upon her children to enter into a penitential disposition, to renounce now their evil ways, and to confess their sins; that by removing these obstacles out of the way, they may be properly prepared for this approaching time of mercy and grace. The very name of Shrove-tide, in old English, signifies the time of confessing sins; because our Catholic ancestors were taught to turn to God at this time with their whole hearts, by humble confession and penance. But how sadly has the spirit of the world perverted this pious institution, and turned this time of devotion and penance into a time of riot and sin, even of such excesses and extravagances, as would much better suit with heathen festivals than with any Christian solemnity, much less with preparation for a penitential fast! Beware, my soul, of conforming thyself to the world, in any of its extravagances at this time, lest by joining now with this enemy of God, and of thy salvation, thou come to lose both thyself, and thy God, for all eternity.

Conclusion. Give ear to the divine oracles:—"Love not the world, nor the things of the world." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John ii. 15). "The friendship of this world is the enemy of God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God" (Jas. iv. 4). And since the word of God thus expressly declares, that there can be no such thing as being a friend both of God and the world, keep off from the love of the world, and from its maxims and customs, lest thou make God thy enemy.

FEBRUARY 18.

On fighting under the Standard of Jesus Christ.

1. There are upon earth, and have been all along, two opposite kingdoms, two opposite interests, two opposite cities: Jerusalem and Babylon, the city of God and the city of the devil; two opposite standards, that of Jesus Christ, and that of Satan

From the time that man unhappily fell from God by sin, Satan set up his tyrannical usurpation. This he has, by all kinds of tricks and lies, endeavoured to maintain ever since, alluring poor deluded mortals with the glittering show of worldly pomp, riches, and pleasures, to become his slaves, and to fight under his standard, and establishing among them His law and maxims, calculated for nothing else but to make them miserable both for time and eternity. And, ah! how unhappily has he prevailed over millions! what multitudes everywhere join with him against their God! how is this wretched Babylon spread over all the earth!

2. Jesus Christ came into this world to set up His standard in opposition to the standard of Satan, and to invite all men to follow Him, promising to deliver His followers from all their evils, and to impart to them all His good. They who duly correspond with His call, and join His royal standard, make up the city of God, the blessed Jerusalem, the Church of the saints. But see now the immense difference between these two opposite cities and their inhabitants; how happy the one, and how miserable the other. The children of Babylon are miserable indeed; they are slaves to passions that can never be satisfied, to a world that can never be contented, to infernal tyrants that are continually dragging them along with them towards hell; they are slaves to empty vanities, childish toys, and lying follies; labouring under a variety of fears, cares, sorrows, uneasinesses, and innumerable other evils, without enjoying so much as one solid or lasting satisfaction. But, oh, how happy are the children of Jerusalem! what content, what peace, what pure pleasure in the soul, are their portion, even in this life, and immortal joys in the next! and shalt thou, my soul, stand one moment to deliberate which of the two thou wilt choose: the standard of Christ or that of Satan; Jerusalem or Babylon; all good or all evil; verity or vanity; happiness or misery; heaven or hell?

3. Consider that all manner of motives, from time and eternity, from our origin and last end, from duty and interest, honour and pleasure, fear and love, concur to determine the soul in her choice, and to fix her in the happy resolution of following the standard of Jesus Christ. Turn then, my soul, turn away from this Babel of confusion, noise, and disorder; break her chains from off thy neck, O captive daughter of Sion. Renounce, for good and all, the king of pride; the tyrant that has usurped to himself the dominion over this world and its deluded admirers; renounce his works and pomps, together with all his associates, the princes of darkness and all their slaves, and turn thyself to the blessed Jerusalem, the city of peace; embrace the King of peace, and His glorious standard, with all thy heart; choose Him for thy King for ever; pay Him irrevocable homage, and promise Him inviolable fidelity and obedience.

Conclusion. Since thou hast now chosen Jesus Christ to be thy King, fight manfully unto death, under His royal standard of the cross, against His and thy enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. In order to this, learn well the exercise of prayer, and the rules of the Gospel, which are the military discipline He has fixed for His soldiers.

FEBRUARY 19.

On the Rules prescribed by Jesus Christ to His followers.

1. Consider the laws of military discipline which Jesus Christ prescribes to all who desire to be soldiers (Matt. xvi. 24). "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." The observance of these three articles makes a complete soldier of Christ. We must renounce ourselves, we must bear our cross, and we must walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. The corruption of man by sin, the wounds that sin has left in all the faculties of the soul, the violence of our disorderly passions, and the bent of our natural inclination to evil, infer a necessity of renouncing ourselves, of fighting against ourselves, and of hating our natural inclinations, if we hope to be happy either here or hereafter. We have not a more dangerous enemy than ourselves, the devil himself cannot hurt us half so much as we hurt ourselves, when we follow our own will, and indulge our own inclinations. Denying ourselves is, therefore, the first article of the discipline of Jesus Christ, in opposition to our unhappy self-love, the root of all our evils, and its three principal branches, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The Son of God came down from heaven to engage us in the holy warfare. The humility, the poverty, the voluntary sufferings of His birth, His life, and His death, were all levelled against these enemies.

2. Remember that the soldier of Jesus Christ must stand to his colours, he must not run from the cross; he must bear and forbear; he must endure many conflicts; he must patiently submit to, and courageously go through, the labours and hardships of this short campaign of his mortal life. He must not pretend to fare better than his Captain and his King. All sufferings and hardships appear nothing to a brave soldier, when he is following his prince, and is happy in his company. The Christian soldier, then, must be willing to carry his cross after Jesus Christ, who opened heaven to us by the cross, and conducts His soldiers thither by the way of the cross. Embrace then, my soul, this happy instrument of thy salvation, in which, if thou bearest it in a proper manner, thou wilt find an inexhaustible source of grace and comfort. Embrace the holy will of God, who lays the cross upon thee to bring thee to Himself. He knows what is

best for thee, because He is infinitely wise ; and He sends thee what He knows is for the best, because He is infinitely good, and good to thee. Thou canst not be in a safer or better way than in the way of the cross, by which Jesus Christ and all His saints have gone to heaven. Even in this life, the true soldiers of Christ find often a greater sweetness in the cross, than in all the pleasures of this world.

3. Consider that the soldiers of Christ are all called, even as His first disciples were, to follow Him ; that is, to walk in His footsteps, by an imitation of His life. He came down from heaven to be our teacher and our model, and it is the great duty of all who desire to belong to Him to copy His blessed example, and to show forth in themselves the life of Jesus Christ ; to learn of Him to be meek and humble of heart ; to learn of Him poverty of spirit, contempt of the honours, riches, and pleasures of this world, and disengagement of the heart from all earthly things ; to learn of Him a horror of sin, and obedience even unto death ; in fine, to learn of Him perpetual conformity to the will of God, and unbounded charity to every neighbour. Such was the life of Jesus Christ, and such ought to be the life of His soldiers.

Conclusion. Embrace henceforward this discipline of Jesus Christ, in all its parts. It is a heavenly discipline indeed, since He came down from heaven to teach it, and the observance of it is to bring us to heaven.

N.B.—That Lent sometimes begins before the 20th of February, sometimes after ; when it begins before, the meditations that are not read at this time are to be read in June, after the Octave of Corpus Christi ; on the other hand, when Lent begins later than the 20th of February, the meditations that shall be wanting here, are to be taken out of the number of those that are placed in the month of June after the aforesaid Octave.

Here follow Meditations for the Feasts of St. Matthias, St. Patrick, St. Joseph, and the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, which commonly fall in Lent.

FEBRUARY 24.

On the Gospel of the Feast of St. Matthias.

1. Consider how our Lord, rejoicing in the Holy Ghost (Matt. xi. 25), &c., addressed Himself to His Heavenly Father in these words, "I give thanks to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things (the great truths of the Gospel) from the wise and prudent (of this world), and hast revealed them to little ones." And learn thou, my soul, to admire and adore in this, the wonderful ways of the wisdom of

God, who ever resists the proud, and gives His grace to the humble, and therefore withdraws and hides Himself and His truths from such as are puffed up with the conceit of their own wit or learning, or any other talents, whether natural or acquired: whilst He discovers His secrets to the little and humble, fills their souls with His heavenly light, and works His greatest wonders in them and by them. Thus He did with regard to His apostles, and so we shall generally find, that the humble and simple have been instruments in the hand of God, of the great works He has wrought in the conversion and sanctification of souls. Blessed be His name for ever, who thus delights in showing His power in weak vessels, and chooses the contemptible things of this world to confound our pride! Teach me, dear Lord, to be ever little and humble!

2. Consider how sweetly our Lord, on the same occasion, invites us to Himself, saying, "Come to Me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." Alas! we all labour in this vale of tears: "The days of this world are short and evil, full of sorrows and miseries, where man is defiled with many sins, ensnared with many passions, assaulted with many fears, disquieted with many cares, dissipated with much curiosity, entangled with many vanities, surrounded with many errors, broken with many hardships and fatigues, troubled with many temptations" (Kempis). And is not this labouring and being heavy laden? Yes, there is "a heavy yoke, indeed, upon the children of Adam, from their coming out of their mother's womb, until the day of their burial into the mother of all" (Eccles. xl. 1). But what remedy, then, for all these evils? We must run to Christ, and He will refresh us; He will comfort and relieve us. We must take His yoke upon us, and He will rescue us from the slavery of sin and Satan; He will qualify all our labours and miseries; He will give us victory over all our passions and temptations; and we shall find rest to our souls; for His yoke is sweet, and His burden light.

3. Consider that our Lord invites us also to learn of Him, to take Him for our master, and to become His scholars. A great honour, indeed, to have the Son of God come down from heaven to be our teacher! But what, then, are we to learn of so great a Master? Are we to learn of Him to make heaven and earth; or to rule and govern the whole universe? Or, are we to learn of Him to work all kinds of miracles, and to raise the dead to life? Oh no; but we are to learn of Him to be meek and humble of heart. This is the great lesson the King of heaven came down to teach us. In learning this, we shall find a remedy for all our evils. No one but He could effectually teach us this lesson. Could we even raise the dead to life, it would be nothing, without learning to be meek and humble of heart, and overcoming passion and pride.

Conclude, O my soul, to comply henceforward with this sweet

summons and invitation of thy dear Lord, and to run to Him, and to put thyself in His service: that with His gracious assistance thou mayest cast off from thy shoulders, the heavy yoke of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and take up His light yoke, and rest in Him for ever.

MARCH 17.

On St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland.

1. Consider how much we owe to God for having called a nation, by the ministry of St. Patrick, from darkness and the shadow of death; that is, from infidelity, idolatry, and vice, into His admirable light; and from being the seat of the reign of Satan, where he for so many ages had exercised his tyranny without control, to become an island of saints! What ought to be then the devotion of the day! how ought we to glorify God for this inestimable benefit of our vocation, and for all those other unspeakable gifts and graces which have been derived from this source! What veneration do we not owe this blessed apostle, whom our Lord chose to be His instrument in this great work; who by his labours, his preaching, and his prayers, first brought Christ amongst the people of Ireland, and who first opened to them, through Christ, the fountains of mercy, grace, and salvation, which flow to this day! Let us praise the Lord in His saints!

2. Consider in what manner God prepared St. Patrick for this admirable work, and by what steps He brought him from virtue to virtue, till he was perfectly qualified for the apostleship. Providence ordained, that in his tender years he should be carried captive into that very land, which he was afterwards to deliver from the slavery of Satan. Here he not only became acquainted with the language and manners of the people, but, what was of infinitely more advantage to him, learned to spend his whole time, night and day, whilst he tended his master's cattle, in the exercises of prayer and penance; by which he laid a solid foundation for an apostolic life. After he was released from slavery, and received amongst the clergy, he employed many years abroad, under the discipline of the most eminent servants of God, in order to dispose and qualify himself to answer that divine call, by which he had been invited to the conversion of the Irish. This he took in hand, when after this long preparation, he received both episcopal consecration and mission, from the Vicar of Jesus Christ, St. Celestine, Bishop of Rome. Thus the Spirit of God, by a long course of spiritual exercises, fitted our saint for the great work for which He designed him; thus He gradually took full possession of that soul, by which he was to bring so many thousands to be His eternal temples. See,

Christians, by what exercises of retirement, penance, and long-continued prayer, you also ought to be prepared, if you hope that the Spirit of God should do great things by you or for you.

3. Consider the admirable means by which St. Patrick was enabled to bring over a whole nation from their errors and vices, to the faith and life of the Gospel, in spite of all the opposition of the world, the flesh, and the devil. These were principally his ardent zeal for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls; his profound humility; his prayer, which was most fervent and continual; and the spirit with which he delivered the word of God. The word of God in his mouth was like a fire, breaking forth from the great furnace of divine love which possessed his own breast, communicated its bright flames to the hearts of all who heard him, and won them over to Christ; his word was mighty to break in pieces even the hardest rocks, and to bring into captivity every understanding, and every will, to the obedience of Christ. See, ye ministers of God, by this example, with what kind of arms you are to bring souls to God; see with what kind of arms you are to overcome all opposition of the enemy, and effectually to establish the reign of Christ in those souls He has committed to your charge. True zeal, profound humility, a spirit of prayer, and a heart burning with ardent charity, will more effectually enable you to convert sinners, than if you were even to raise the dead to life. See, all ye Christians in general, in this great example of our saint, what are the principal ingredients of true sanctity, and what are the virtues and exercises that will bring you also to be saints. The zeal, or desire of pleasing God in all things, sincere humility, fervent prayer, and true charity in both its branches, are necessary for all: these will surely make us saints, and nothing less than these can secure the salvation of any one.

Conclusion. Offer up to God on this day, a heart full of love and gratitude for the innumerable graces and blessings bestowed upon Ireland through the ministry of St. Patrick, and of that long train of saints who have descended from him. Let us never degenerate from these our parents in Christ, or forget the glorious examples of their heroic virtues. Oh! who shall give us to see Ireland once more an island of saints!

MARCH 19.

On St. Joseph.

1. Consider the testimony the Holy Ghost has given to the virtue and sanctity of St. Joseph, by telling us in the Gospel that he was a just man. Doubtless the Almighty would never have made choice of any man to be the chaste bridegroom of the purest of virgins, and the foster-father and guardian of His own

divine Son, who was not consummate in purity and sanctity. Learn hence, Christian souls, what kind of qualifications will make you also agreeable to Jesus and Mary; you will certainly drive them far away from you by criminal impurity. Admire the command St. Joseph had of his passions, in joining perfect continency with the state of marriage; and in the evenness of soul, which he preserved under all events, how adverse soever; and learn of him to keep thy passions under subjection, and cheerfully to submit thy will, on all occasions, to the appointments of Heaven.

2. Consider the great example St. Joseph has given us of all other virtues; his lively faith in the ready submission of his soul to belief in the most difficult mysteries, relating to the incarnation of the Son of God; his ardent love of his dearest Jesus; his concern and tender care for Him in infancy and childhood, and his wonderful diligence in all that belonged to his charge; his meekness and charity to the Blessed Virgin, when to his unspeakable surprise, he found her with child; his ready obedience, without demur or reply, to every intimation of the will of Heaven, whatever hardships or labours it might put him to, as in the case of the flight into Egypt; his patience under afflictions and persecutions; his humble submission, notwithstanding his royal extraction, to the toil and labour of a handicraft, to gain a poor livelihood for himself and for Jesus and Mary, with the sweat of his brow; together with an amiable simplicity in his whole comportment, and perpetual attention to God, by divine contemplation. Christians, let us imitate his virtues, whatsoever our station of life may be. We see by his example, that perfect sanctity may be found even in the midst of the distractions of a worldly calling, and that if we are not saints, it is not the fault of our calling, but of our not corresponding with divine grace. St. Joseph found great advantage to his soul from having Jesus always in his company, and working with Him. Let us also take care to have Jesus always with us, wherever we are, or whatever we are doing, by a spirit of recollection, and constant attention to Him, and never to drive Him away by sinful conversation, or by entertaining His enemies in our interior, and we shall quickly be sensible of the fruits His presence will bring to our souls.

3. Learn from the example of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, how great an error the world lies under, when it flies with so much eagerness from poverty and labour, conceiving them to be great evils, whereas the wisdom of God made choice of them for Himself, His blessed mother, His reputed father, and which they have consecrated by their life and practice. For thy part, have another way of thinking, and if thy condition be that of the rich, be not puffed up with it, but rather humble thyself to see thou art so unlike that blessed family, and fear the many dangers

that riches are exposed to ; despise not the poor, but ever honour and succour them, as the relations of Christ, or as Christ Himself ; thou hast His authority for so doing. If thou art poor, remember thou wearest the livery of Christ, and of His family ; comfort thyself in the resemblance thou bearest them ; and take care lest, by murmuring or impatience, thou lose any of the advantages thy state entitles thee to. If thou followest any trade or handicraft, take St. Joseph for thy patron and thy model. Thou seest, by his example, that sanctity is not inconsistent with business. But then take heed, lest by any fraud or injustice, or by excessive solicitude for the things of this world, to the neglect of thy soul, thou banish Jesus from thy shop or house. Be sure to make Him the companion of all thy labours, offer up all thou dost to Him, and often entertain thyself with Him. If God has blessed thee with children, take care by early diligence to form Christ in them, by constantly instilling into their tender minds the fear and love of God, and horror of sin ; thus thou mayest, like St. Joseph, bring up Jesus in these little ones.

Conclusion. Honour St. Joseph, by imitating his virtues, and in order to do this, implore the assistance of his prayers. His interest is great with our Lord, as St. Teresa declares she frequently experienced. Beg in particular his intercession for obtaining a happy death ; St. Joseph was happy in death, by having our Lord and the Blessed Virgin to attend and assist him. Let us, like him, keep ever close to them in life, and they will be with us in death.

MARCH 25.

On the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin.

1. Consider how the angel Gabriel "was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a Virgin, espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David ; and the Virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said to her, Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women. And when she had heard, she was troubled at his saying, and thought within herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God : Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Christians, give attention to this most sacred and most solemn embassy, sent from the King of heaven not to any of the great ones or potentates of this world, but to a poor and humble maid, to treat with her

upon the highest matters, even upon the great business of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the establishment of His everlasting kingdom, and the redemption and salvation of man. Admire and adore the depth of the wisdom of the ways of God, so much exalted above the maxims and ways of the worldly wise, by which He is pleased to bring about such great things, without noise or pomp, in so humble a manner, and by such humble instruments. And give thanks for that infinite goodness and love for us, which He has shown in the mystery of this day.

2. Consider the great lessons the Blessed Virgin teaches us, by her whole comportment on this occasion. She is favoured with a message from God; she is greeted by one of the highest of angels, as full of divine grace; she is told that the Lord is with her, and that she is blessed among all women; and instead of being puffed up with these high favours, or taking any vain complacency in these titles and encomiums, she is troubled at the words of the angel, and through the humble opinion she has of herself, wonders what should be the meaning of such a salutation. She is assured by the angel that she has found grace with God, and is chosen by Him, to conceive and bear the Saviour of the world, even the Son of the Most High; and so great is her love for virginal purity, that she is ready to forego the dignity of mother of God, rather than part with her virginity. How shall this be done, because I know not man?—being consecrated by vow to God, and determined to keep my vow. The angel informs her, that she shall conceive by the Holy Ghost, and be overshadowed by the power of the Most High, so as still to remain a pure maid. And then with most profound humility, a most perfect oblation of herself to God, and an entire conformity to His blessed will, she cries, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord! be it done to me according to Thy word!" Let us study well, and learn of her the practice of these great lessons of humility, love of purity, and perfect resignation of ourselves to the will of God.

3. Consider how, as soon as the Blessed Virgin had thus given her consent, she immediately conceived by the Holy Ghost, who by His almighty power, formed a body out of her purest blood, and created an immortal soul for that body; and this body and soul were in that instant assumed and united to the eternal Word, the Son of God, the second Person of the adorable Trinity. And thus was celebrated, in the Virgin's womb, the sacred wedding of our human nature with the divine person of the Son of God, to the feast of which we are invited. Thus the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us. This great mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God is the original source of all our good; in making God man, it has made man God. The Son of God, by taking upon Him our humanity, makes us partakers of His divinity. He comes to be our Saviour and our Redeemer, to

deliver us from all evil; He comes to be our advocate and our physician; He comes to be our father and our friend; He comes to be our king and our priest, and to make us kings and priests to His Father. He stoops down to raise us from the dust, and to bring us to sit with Him on His throne. See then, my soul, in what manner thou oughtest to celebrate this great festival of the conception of the Son of God! what homage and adoration, what praise and thanksgiving thou owest Him for these wonders He has wrought in thy favour! what return of love for His love to thee! Oh, welcome Him at least to the best of thy power; and since He comes to dwell among us, beg of Him to accept the lodging of thy heart.

Conclusion. Keep for ever in thy soul a faithful, grateful, and loving remembrance of the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, and a sincere affection for His Virgin Mother; and with these dispositions, frequently in the day repeat the angelical salutation, more especially at the Angelus morning, noon, and night.

ON ASH-WEDNESDAY.

1. Consider how God calls upon us, by His prophet, in the lesson of this day, "Be converted to Me," saith He, "with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God" (Joel ii. 12, 13). Christians, hearken to this summons from heaven. Let it sink deep into your souls; and if this day you hear the voice of God, sweetly inviting you to turn to Him in good earnest; now at this holy season harden not your hearts, lest provoked by your impenitence He turn away from you, and you die in your sins. Let us repent and amend, as we are admonished by the Church on this day, whilst we have time, lest being overtaken by death, which is ever following at our heels, we should seek for time of penance, and not be able to find it.

2. Consider the meaning of the ashes which are put on our heads this day with these words, "Remember thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return." Sackcloth and ashes were the ancient habit of penitents. The Ninevites by fasting in sackcloth and ashes found mercy. Let these ashes then, which we receive on our heads, at the beginning of this penitential fast, be a lesson to us, to enter upon it with the like penitential spirit. They are an emblem of contrition and humility: let us receive them with a contrite and humble heart. They are also a remembrance of our mortality, of our frail composition, and of our return to our mother earth. Let us think well on this, and renounce henceforward our unhappy pride and presumption. Let us make good use of our time, and prepare for that moment,

which shall ere long send away our souls into eternity, and turn our bodies into dust.

3. Consider, Christian soul, those words, as if they were addressed to thee : "Yet forty days, and Ninive shall be destroyed" (Jonas iii. 4). Alas ! have not thy sins, like those of Ninive, called to heaven this long time for vengeance ? And hast thou not too much reason to fear, lest the mercy which thou hast so long abused, quickly give place to justice, and leave thee to die in thy sins ? Perhaps this is the last reprieve God will grant thee. It may be, the good use, or abuse of these forty days, will determine thy lot for eternity.

Conclusion. Spare no pains to avert the judgment that hangs over thy head ; and so spend these forty days of reprieve in suing for mercy, after the manner God has appointed, that is, by fasting, weeping, and mourning, that thou mayest effectually find it.

THURSDAY AFTER ASH-WEDNESDAY.

On Fasting.

1. Consider how much fasting is recommended to us in the word of God ; by the great example of Christ and His saints, as well of the Old as of the New Testament ; how we are there called upon to turn to God with fasting (Joel ii.) ; how the greatest sinners have found mercy by fasting (Jonas iii.) ; how we are taught that all Christ's children are to fast during His absence from us (Matt. ix. 15) ; and that the devil is not to be cast out, but by prayer and fasting (Mark ix. 28). Man fell from God originally by intemperance ; he returns to Him by fasting. Gratifying our sensual appetite betrays us, both to the flesh and the devil : we overcome both by fasting ; by means of which (as the Church daily inculcates in the preface for Lent) God restrains our vices and passions, elevates our souls to Himself, and bestows upon us His heavenly gifts and graces. Oh, happy fasting, which drives away all our evils, heals both soul and body, and brings us to our sovereign good !

2. There are three great advantages in fasting : First, it appeases the wrath of God, provoked by our sins ; inasmuch as by fasting for them we acknowledge our guilt, and take part with His justice in condemning and punishing ourselves. For there is nothing sooner moves God to show us mercy than the homage we pay to His justice, by exercising a wholesome severity against the wretch that has dared to offend God. Let us conceive a just indignation against this sinful flesh ! Let us not spare the traitor, that has so often betrayed us into sin ! Let a penitential fast be our regular exercise.

3. Another great advantage of fasting is, that we are enabled by it to overcome our passions and concupiscences. Fasting, when

performed with a due spirit, humbles the soul exceedingly, and consequently restrains the irregular motions of the passions that are the daughters of pride. It keeps the flesh in subjection, by depriving it of the principal nourishment of its rebellions and disorders; and obliges it to submit to the spirit. And, which is a third advantage, in proportion to its weakening the passions of the flesh, it gives strength and vigour to the soul, sets it at liberty from the clogs that hinder its free application to heavenly truths; and enables it to fly upwards towards God by purer prayer and contemplation.

Conclusion. Set a due value on this wholesome exercise, which has been the favourite of all the saints; and has greatly contributed to make them the favourites of Heaven. But take care that your fasting be accompanied with proper dispositions, that it may be such a fast as God hath chosen.

FRIDAY AFTER ASH-WEDNESDAY.

On the Rules of Fasting.

1. Consider that fasting, according to the present discipline of the Church, implies three things. First, we are to abstain from flesh meat on fasting days; secondly, we are to eat but one meal in the day; and thirdly, we are not to take that meal till about noon. The ancient discipline of the Church was more rigorous, both in point of the abstinence, and in not allowing the meal in Lent till the evening. These regulations are calculated to mortify the sensual appetite by penance and self-denial. If you find some difficulty in the observance of them, offer it up to God for your sins. Fasting is not designed to please, but to punish. Your diligent compliance with the laws of our mother the Church will give an additional value to your mortifications, from the virtue of obedience.

2. We must not content ourselves with the outward observance of the regulations that relate to our diet on fasting days; but we must principally have regard to the inward spirit, and what we may call the very soul of the fast, which is a penitential spirit; without this the outward observance is but like a carcass without life. This penitential spirit implies a deep sense of the guilt of our sins, a horror and a hearty sorrow for them, a sincere desire to return to God, and renounce our sinful ways for the future, and particularly a readiness of mind to make the best satisfaction we are capable of to divine justice, by penancing ourselves for our sins. Fasting, performed in this spirit, cannot fail of moving God to mercy. O my soul, let thy fasting be always animated with this spirit!

3. Fervent prayer, and alms-deeds also according to each one's ability, ought to be the inseparable companions of our fasting.

These three sisters should go hand in hand (Tob. xii. 8), to help us in our warfare against our three mortal enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil. The practice of the three eminent good works we must oppose to that triple concupiscence which reigns in the world, and by means of which Satan maintains his unhappy reign. By fasting we overcome the lust of the flesh ; by alms-deeds we subdue the lust of the eyes, by which we are apt to covet the mammon of the world and its empty toys ; and by fervent and humble prayer we conquer the pride of life, and put to flight the devil, the king of pride. Let us never forget to call in these powerful auxiliaries to help us in our warfare. Let alms-deeds and prayer ever accompany our fasts.

Conclusion. Follow these rules, if you desire your fast should be acceptable ; if you fail in them, it will not be such a fast as God hath chosen.

SATURDAY AFTER ASH-WEDNESDAY.

On the Great Fast of a Christian.

1. Consider that the great and general fast of a Christian is to abstain from sin. This fast obliges all sorts of persons, young and old, sick and healthy, at all times and in all places. To pretend to fast, and yet to go on in wilful sin, is a mockery rather than a fast. What were the Pharisees the better for their fasting, whilst their souls were corrupted with pride, covetousness, malice, and hypocrisy ? Did not God reject the fast of the Jews (Isa. lviii.), because on the days of their fasting, they continued to provoke Him by their customary sins ? And will He be better pleased with us, if in pretending to fast we are guilty of the like disorders ? No, certainly. If then we would fast to the purpose, "Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and then He will have mercy upon him."

2. The true Christian fast should not only put a restraint upon the sensual appetite, in point of eating, but also extend itself to a more general mortification of every one of the senses and faculties, in and by which we have been liable to intemperance or excess. The eyes, the ears, the tongue, and so of all the rest, ought likewise to fast, from curiosity, sensuality, vanity, carnal pleasures, idle conversation, theatrical shows, and other worldly and sensual diversions unbecoming a serious Christian penitent at all times, but much more on days of fasting. But especially we are warned (Isa. lviii. 3), on the days of our fasting, not to indulge our will, humour, and passion, as that of all things is the most opposite to the fast which God hath chosen. My soul, see thou take good notice of this lesson ; beware lest thou break thy fast, by indulging self-will, pride, and passion.

3. Weigh well the description given by the prophet (Isa. lviii.) of the fast that is acceptable to the Lord, and of its happy effects in the soul. "Is not this," said the Lord, "the fast that I have chosen? Loose the bands of wickedness, and break asunder every burden. Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and the harbourless into thy house; when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall speedily arise, and thy justice shall go before thy face. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall hear, if thou wilt take away the chain out of the midst of thee, and cease to keep that which is good for nothing. When thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry, and shalt satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise up in darkness. And the Lord will give thee rest continually, and fill thy soul with brightness. And thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a fountain whose waters shall not fail."

Conclusion. Ever make it the great business of thy fast, to break thy bonds asunder, and to put away from thee the chains of sin, and then, by exercising works of mercy, thou thyself shalt be entitled to mercy, and to all that is good.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

On the Fast of Lent.

1. Consider that a fast of forty days has been recommended by the law and the prophets, and sanctified by the example of Christ Himself. Moses fasted forty days (Exod. xxiv. 18), whilst he conversed with God in the mountain when he received the divine law. And again, when the people had sinned, he returned to the Lord to the mountain, and fasted other forty days (Exod. xxxiv. 28). Elias fasted forty days in the wilderness, before he came to the mountain of God, where he was favoured with the vision of God, so far as man is capable of seeing Him in this life (3 Kings xix. 8). Christ our Lord, before He entered upon His mission, retired into a wilderness, and there employed forty days in prayer and fasting (Matt. iv. 2). How happy shall we be, if, by imitating, according to our small ability, these great examples, we also draw near to God by this forty days' fast of Lent! But then, in order to this, we must join, as they did, retirement and much prayer with our fasting.

2. The forty days' fast of Lent among Christians is primitive and apostolical: it began with Christianity itself, and with Christianity has been received by all people and nations which have received the faith and law of Christ. Welcome then, my soul, this solemn penitential fast, this apostolical practice, this precious remnant of primitive discipline. But see it be with a

penitential spirit. "Behold now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 3). Take care not to receive so great a grace in vain. These forty days, if thou make good use of them, will be happy days to thee. "Seek the Lord whilst He may be found, call upon Him while He is near" (Isa. lv.)

3. Remember that the great business of Lent is to do penance for our sins, to go daily with Magdalene to the feet of Christ, to wash them in spirit with penitential tears, to make our confession and lay down all our sins at His feet, begging that He would cancel them with His precious blood. We must renounce them for ever, detest and bewail them in His sight; and offer Him our poor hearts with all our affections, in order to make Him the best amends we can for our past disloyalties, by loving Him with all our power for the time to come, that, as He said of Magdalene (Luke vii.), "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much," so He may also say of us. In this spirit we should make a daily offering of our fasting, and other self-denials, and penitential exercises of this time, to be united to the passion and death of the Son of God, and so to be accepted through Him, in satisfaction for our sins. Do this, my soul, during these forty days, and thou shalt live.

Conclusion. Make good use of this holy time, in which mercy flows; admire and adore that mercy which has endured thee so long, and which presses thee to return now, at least, to thy God. Take care, lest provoked by thy impenitence, He cut thee off in thy sins!

MONDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

On the ends of the Institution of Lent.

1. Consider that, besides the great business of doing penance for the sins of the year, and of our whole lives, which is the main design of Lent; it is also instituted to be, in a particular manner, a time of devotion, in which we may worthily commemorate the sufferings and death of our Redeemer. We should make these the subject of our daily meditation; in which also we may, by more than ordinary recollection and prayer, dispose our souls for duly celebrating the great Paschal solemnity, and imitating therein the resurrection of the Son of God. Thus we may in such manner cleanse and purify our souls by spiritual exercises, as to be fit to approach worthily (as the Church commands us) to the divine mysteries at Easter. See, my soul, thou keep Lent in such manner as to answer these ends.

2. Lent is a time which God particularly claims for Himself; as being the tithe of the year, which therefore ought to be set aside for Him. In the old law He appointed that the tithes of

all things should be sanctified to Him (Lev. xxii.). And surely nothing can be more just, than that we should offer our tithes at least, to Him who gives us all. How justly then does He require of us the tithe of our years, by our dedicating these forty days in a special manner to His service? How religiously, then, and how holily ought we to spend this time of Lent, that our performances may answer the great design of consecrating the tithe of the year to the divine service? An offering made to God ought to be without blemish; let our Lent offering be such.

3. The time of Lent ought to be for people who live in the world what a spiritual retreat is for regular communities; that is, a time in which retiring as much as may be from the noise and distractions of the world, they may enter into themselves, and take a serious view of the whole state of their interior. Now is the time for them to see and examine how the soul stands affected, in relation to God, her neighbour, and herself; how she acquits herself of her duties, as well those incumbent on all Christians, as those that are proper to her calling, or relative to those under her charge. Now is the time to search diligently after such secret sins as are apt to lie lurking in the soul, disguised by some pretext of good, or wrapt up under the folds of self-love. In a word, now is the time to acquire true knowledge of ourselves, in order to apply a proper remedy to all our evils, and to lay a solid foundation of a good life for the future.

Conclusion. Answer, in the best manner thou art able, all these ends of the institution of Lent, and particularly apply thyself at this time to take, as it were, in pieces the whole method of thy life, and reform all that thou findest amiss.

TUESDAY.

On the examination of the state of our interior.

1. Consider the dreadful mischief that follows from our not knowing the true state of our souls! Alas! what would it avail us to have all other science, and to know all things else, if we should not know what passes within us, and so should want this most necessary of all sciences, the knowledge of ourselves. How many are there in the world who pass their whole lives in mortal sin, and yet, for want of looking into themselves, are not aware of it! How many imagine themselves to be alive, "and have the name of being alive, and yet are dead!" (Apoc. iii. 1). How many imagine their souls to be rich and wealthy, and to stand in need of nothing, and they know not that in very truth, and in the sight of God, "they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Apoc. iii. 17). "From my hidden sins

cleanse me, O Lord ; and from the sins of others spare Thy servant" (Ps. xviii. 13).

2. To prevent so great an evil, every Christian ought often to examine into the true state of his interior, and consider seriously what are the real dispositions of his soul, especially with regard to God. He cannot be in the state of grace, or in the way of salvation, if he love not God above all things. Reflect, my soul ! is there nothing thou lovest more than God ? Is there nothing that takes place of Him in thy affections ? How comes it that God is so seldom thought of in the course of the day ? How comes it that on so many occasions worldly honour, temporal interest, sensual pleasures, gratifying thyself or the world, make thee turn thy back on Him ? The true lover is ever thinking on the object of his love, and never better content than when in company, and conversing with his beloved. Is thy love of God such as this ? Art thou resolutely determined, for no consideration whatever, for no honour, interest, pleasure, human respect, fear, or love, for nothing, in fine, that the world can give or take away, to be disloyal to thy God ? If not, the love of God is not in thee, and thou art none of His. This is the best rule to know whether thou really lovest God or not. But then, to know thy true disposition in this regard, examine thy works. "If you love Me," saith the Lord, "keep My commandments" (John xiv. 15).

3. Thou must also examine how thy soul stands affected with regard to thy neighbour. For here is another great branch of the Christian's duty, in which his soul is no less interested, and in which too many deceive themselves. Art thou just in thy thoughts, words, and works, to thy neighbour ? Dost thou live up to the rules of charity in this regard ? Art thou not censorious in thy judgments, bitter in thy speech, hasty and passionate in thy manner ? Dost thou never injure him in his reputation by backbiting and detraction, in his honour by affronts, in his friends by tale-bearing, and in the peace of his mind by derision or contempt ? Art thou just in all thy dealings with him ? Dost thou pay him his due ? Dost thou keep anything from him unjustly ? Dost thou do by him, in whatever station of life he may be, as thou wouldst be done by, if thou wert in his place ? Is there no rancour in thy heart against any soul upon earth ? No secret hatred, malice, or envy ? Examine thyself well upon all these heads, in which millions deceive themselves, to their eternal perdition.

Conclusion. Labour seriously for the knowledge of thyself, that thou mayest effectually amend thy life and save thy soul. For why shouldst thou suffer thyself to be any longer blindfolded by passion or affected ignorance, with evident danger of falling down the dreadful precipice which leads to a miserable eternity.

EMBER-WEDNESDAY, FIRST WEEK IN LENT.

On a further examination of the soul.

1. Consider that we must also examine the state of our souls as to hidden sins, and such sins as we may be guilty of in others; for in these kinds many are guilty of great disorders, while they flatter themselves that all goes well with them. Few indeed are ignorant of their carnal sins; though even in these, people sometimes deceive themselves, but very many take little or no notice of their spiritual sins, which are more interior; and though less infamous in the eyes of men, are more heinous in the sight of God. See then thou examine thyself thoroughly upon these heads; for spiritual sins are commonly very subtle, and not easily discerned, without diligent search. Nay, sometimes such as are the most guilty will not believe themselves guilty of them at all. These spiritual sins are of five kinds; viz., pride, covetousness, envy, secret malice, and spiritual sloth. Look into them one by one, and if thy self-love will suffer thee to be impartial in thy search, thou wilt, perhaps, find thyself more guilty than thou art aware of.

2. Consider in particular how full thou art of thyself; how fond of everything that flatters thee: how presumptuous of thy own sufficiency, how apt to compare thyself with others, in thy thoughts, and to give thyself the preference; how apt to despise others; how unwilling to suffer any reproof or contradiction; how ready to swell with indignation upon every trifling opposition or contempt; how apt to break out into a storm upon every supposed affront; how much concerned at what the world will think or say of thy performances; how much more solicitous for thy own honour than for the honour of God. What is all this but an unhappy pride, which is laying waste thy soul and corrupting its very vitals, whilst thou art not sensible of it? See also, as to covetousness, whether the love of the mammon of the world does not reign in thy heart. Alas! the greatest miser does not think himself covetous; but the tree is to be known by its fruits, such as an anxious care and perpetual solicitude about the things of the world; and upon this account neglecting prayer and other spiritual duties, or being continually distracted in them; thinking more of thy money than of thy God, locking up thy heart in thy chest, losing thy peace upon every loss or disappointment, and a strange unwillingness to part with thy money, even when the honour of God, or thy neighbour's necessities, call for it. See if nothing of this be thy case. See if thou art not more afraid of losing thy worldly substance than thy God. If so, thou art not in the way to heaven.

3. As to the other spiritual sins, is there no person for whom

thou hast a secret envy? No one whose praises, whose endowments, corporal or spiritual, whose virtues or performances, make thee uneasy, and gnaw thy soul, as if their advantages were a lessening to the honour, praise, and esteem which thou affectest. How common is this mortal crime, and how many detractions and other evils does it produce! and yet how many take very little notice of it! Is it thy case? Then, as to secret malice, rancour, and hatred; how dost thou stand affected? Look well into thyself, for here again we are too apt to deceive ourselves; but we must judge of the tree by its fruits, that is, by our way of thinking, speaking, and acting, with relation to our supposed enemies. Now there is so wide a difference between the fruits of charity and those of malice, between love and hatred, that if we are sincere in our examination we cannot well be deceived therein. And as to spiritual sloth, which is a clog upon the soul, infinitely opposed to the love of God, to the spirit of prayer, to a due care in frequenting the sacraments and other duties; this is also a most common evil, which frequently amounts to a mortal sin, and yet how seldom do lukewarm souls take notice of it?

Conclusion. Declare eternal war against all these vices, and particularly against that which thou hast reason to apprehend is thy predominant passion, that is to say, the chiefest and most dangerous of all thy enemies.

THURSDAY IN EMBER WEEK.

On other Sins which we are to inquire into.

1. In order to know the true state of our souls we must also examine how we discharge ourselves of all our duties; and not only of such duties as are common to all Christians, but of such also as are particularly incumbent on us in our station of life. Alas! how many take notice of their sins of commission, but not of their sins of omission! How many make some account of such duties as relate to their own conduct, but are not concerned to see that others under their charge serve the Lord? How many examine themselves upon the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church, so far as they appertain to all Christians in general; but pass over the particular duties and obligations annexed to their calling, or state of life, to which nevertheless they are strictly bound either by law, or by covenant, or by oath, or by the very nature of their calling? Reflect thou, my soul, on these things. The grand duty of man, the great end for which he came into the world, his whole business in life, is to dedicate and consecrate his very being and his life to the love and service of His Maker. All thy days, O man, are given thee for this end. The omission of this great duty is highly criminal; it is usually the first sin that man falls into. And yet how few sufficiently reflect

on it! Alas! how many millions of souls are lost by this omission; who, though they are guilty neither of blasphemy, nor murder, nor adultery, nor theft, are justly condemned for omitting to dedicate themselves in earnest to the love and service of God!

2. Consider, Christian soul, what care thou takest of thy children, thy servants, and of all under thy charge. The regularity of thy own life will never bring thee to heaven, if through thy negligence, their lives be irregular. Reflect well on this, and see if thou art not guilty of many criminal omissions in this kind. Again, reflect on the particular obligations annexed to thy calling and how far thou performest what the law of God, or man, requires of thee in thy station; for example, that of pastor, teacher, lawyer, physician, tradesman, servant, &c. See whether thou makest good thy covenants. And if any oath were required at thy first admission, or afterwards; see what care thou hast taken to discharge thyself of the obligations of it. Alas, how many, in entering upon their respective callings, take certain oaths, and afterwards perhaps think no more of them! And can this be the way to heaven? See then how necessary it is that a Christian, who has a mind to secure his soul, should look well into himself.

3. Consider whether thou hast nothing to apprehend, with regard to thy salvation, from the sins of others? and this not only from thy omissions or thy neglect in restraining those under thy charge from sin, or keeping away from them the occasions of sin; but because of thy commissions, too, in promoting or encouraging sin by word or work, in enticing or provoking to sin, in flattering or applauding people in their sins, and in contributing to keep up the pernicious maxims of the world, in point of honour, interest and pleasure, by which numbers of poor souls are enslaved to sin and dragged into hell. Reflect withal how little guard thou generally hast upon thy words in thy ordinary conversation, and whether thy carelessness therein may not frequently be attended with very bad consequences to the souls of thy neighbours, by giving them some occasion of sin, either in thought, word, or deed? Alas! how many sins will be brought to light in the great day, which careless souls, in the time of this life but little apprehend, and so continue till death in the guilt of them.

Conclusion. Make such good use of the spiritual exercises of this time; and especially study so well what passes within thee, as to be no longer blind to thy own sins, and a stranger at home. O my God! do thou give me grace now, at least, perfectly to know myself. Grant that I may renounce, and do penance for, all my past sins, and henceforward settle my soul upon a more secure foundation which may stand for eternity.

FRIDAY IN EMBER WEEK.

On exercising works of Mercy.

1. Consider that in order to find mercy, we must show mercy. "Blessed are the merciful," saith our Lord, "for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. v. 7). And on the other hand, "Judgment without mercy," saith St. James, "to him that hath not done mercy" (ii. 13). God expressly rejects the fast of them that refuse to show mercy to their neighbour (Isa. lviii). He declares He will neither give ear to their prayers, nor accept of their sacrifices (Prov. xxi. 13, Isa. i. 11, 15–18). If then thou desirest at this time effectually to sue for divine mercy, in the forgiveness of thy sins, see that thy fasting and prayer be accompanied with alms-deeds. "If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so willingly to bestow a little" (Tob. iv. 9). This mercy and charity exercised by thee will recommend thy fasting and prayer to God who is all charity, and whose tender mercies are above all His works.

2. How many ways, and upon how many occasions, the Word of God recommends alms-deeds to us. It promises an eternal kingdom in heaven to all who are diligent in this exercise, and threatens with eternal damnation all who are negligent (Matt. xxv.). It shows that the definitive sentence which is to decide our eternal doom is to be passed upon each one of us, according to his behaviour in this respect (Ibid). It encourages even the greatest sinners "to redeem their sins with alms, and their iniquities with works of mercy to the poor" (Dan. iv. 24). It assures them that by means of alms "all things shall be made clean to them" (Luke xii. 41); that "alms deliver from all sin and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness" (Tob. iv. 11); that Christ considers what is done for the poor as done for Himself, and will reward it accordingly (Matt. xxv.); "that he that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and He will repay him" (Pro. xix. 17). To pass over many other texts, promising all kinds of good, both for this world and the next, to works of mercy; and threatening the hard-hearted and unmerciful with the worst of God's judgments. Attend to these heavenly oracles; embrace with all the affection of thy heart this lovely virtue of mercy, the favourite daughter of the great King. It was mercy brought Him down from heaven to thee; and mercy must carry thee up to Him thither.

3. Consider the conditions that must accompany our alms, in order that they may be capable of producing these great effects. 1st. They must be liberal, and proportionate to our ability; "He that soweth sparingly shall reap but sparingly." What then can the worldling expect, who for every penny he gives to God, in the person of the poor, gives a pound to the devil, and to his own passions and lusts? 2ndly. Our alms must be given with a

pure intention ; that is, not out of ostentation or vainglory, or for any human motive, but for God's sake ; otherwise they will have no reward from God. 3dly. Our alms can never effectually procure for us the remission of our sins, except we join with them a sincere repentance, together with an effectual resolution of loving and serving God for the future. Christians, take good notice of these three articles ; and particularly remember that neither alms, nor anything else, can give any manner of security to the man who wilfully persists in mortal sin.

Conclusion. Esteem, love, and practise upon every occasion this blessed virtue of mercy. But see that thy intention be pure, and beware of losing the benefit of it by an impenitent heart.

SATURDAY IN EMBER-WEEK.

On the spiritual works of Mercy.

1. Consider that the spiritual works of mercy, by which we relieve our neighbours in the necessities of their souls, are of far greater value in the sight of God than such as relate merely to their bodies. If then He is pleased to promise such ample rewards to feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and such like good works which relate only to those corruptible bodies, and to the short time of our mortal pilgrimage ; how much more will He esteem and reward those works of mercy and charity, by which immortal souls, made after God's own image, and redeemed by the blood of Christ, are drawn out of darkness and sin, rescued from Satan and hell, and brought to God and a happy eternity ? "He that causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way," saith the Scripture, "shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (James v. 20). "And they that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity" (Dan. xii. 3).

2. The spiritual works of mercy are exercised principally by reclaiming sinners from their evil ways, even the ways of death and hell, by admonitions, remonstrances, fraternal corrections, by enlightening and instructing such as through ignorance are in danger of losing their souls, or by procuring them this light and instruction from other proper persons ; by comforting the afflicted, encouraging the pusillanimous, upholding and assisting them that are under temptations, reconciling such as are at variance, bearing with all, forgiving all, overcoming evil with good, and praying for all. Oh, how happy, how precious in the sight of God, is a life spent in such works of mercy and charity, as these are ! and how happy will that death be that shall conclude such a life. Oh, that we may lead such a life ! Oh, that we may die such a death !

3. These spiritual works of mercy are not only the most acceptable of all, and the most meritorious in the sight of God, but are

also of strict obligation, and this not only to pastors, but to all Christians, according to their circumstances and abilities. Charity is a virtue of universal obligation, and the principal object of that love, which charity obliges us to have for our neighbours, is the eternal welfare of their immortal souls. If, then, we can unconcernedly see numbers of souls crowding into hell, without affording them the help that lies in our power in order to rescue them from that extremity of endless misery, it is evident that we have no charity for them ; and if so, may not our case one day be as bad as theirs ? What then must we do ? We must gladly lay hold of every opportunity to contribute what lies in us to the conversion and salvation of any of these poor unhappy souls, and we shall quickly find that opportunities of this nature will not be wanting, if we take the matter to heart. There are at least two ways, and those the most effectual of all, of reclaiming sinners and bringing them to God, which are certainly in the power of every one, and from which no one can be excused ; and these are the example of a holy life, and the efficacy of fervent prayer poured out to God in behalf of poor sinners.

Conclusion. Ever make use of these two most effectual ways of bringing sinners to God ; yet so as not to neglect any other means that lie in thy power. What a comfort will it be to thee, what an honour, what a happiness, to be the instrument of God in the salvation of souls ; that same great work which brought the Son of God from heaven ! but what dreadful punishments mayest thou not justly apprehend if, for want of this charity any of these souls should perish, because thou wouldst not lend them a helping hand to withdraw them from the precipice to which they were running ! Will not their blood one day cry to heaven for vengeance against thee !

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

On Prayer.

1. The time of Lent is a time not only for fasting and giving alms, but is also in a particular manner a time of devotion and prayer. Fasting, alms, and prayer are three sisters, which ought to go hand in hand, and with united forces to offer a holy violence to heaven, which is not to be taken but by violence. If then prayer be at all times necessary, if it be the very life of a Christian soul, it is certainly a most indispensable part of our duty at this holy time. But what is prayer ? It is a conversation with God, it is a raising up of the mind and heart to God, it is an address of the soul to God, in which we present Him with our homage, adoration, praise, and thanksgiving. We exercise ourselves in His presence, in acts of faith, hope, and love, and we lay before Him all our necessities, and those of the

whole world, begging mercy, grace, and salvation at His hands. O my soul, how happy it is! how glorious. how pleasant, to entertain thyself thus with thy God! Is it not in some measure anticipating the joys of heaven? For what is heaven but to be with God!

2. Consider more in particular the excellent advantages the soul enjoys by means of prayer. It gives her free access whensoever she pleases to the throne of His Divine Majesty and to make her addresses to Him, any hour of the day or night, with a positive assurance from Him of meeting with a favourable audience; it admits her as often as she pleases into His sanctuary, where she may find Him alone, and treat with Him with all freedom as long as she will; and she may be assured He will never be wearied with her importunity, nor shut the door against her. Will any prince of the earth allow anything like this even to his greatest favourite? Christian soul, what an honour is this! And why art thou not more ambitious of it?

3. Consider how delightful prayer is to the soul that truly loveth God. The true lover finds the greatest pleasure in thinking of and speaking with the object of his love. If then the soul truly love God, nothing will be more sweet to her than this heavenly intercourse and conversation with her sovereign good. The saints have found it so, when they passed whole nights in prayer, and thought the time very short, through the delight they found in the company of their beloved. My soul! if thou find no such delight in prayer, see if it be not for want of love.

Conclusion. Embrace this heavenly exercise of prayer at all opportunities. Here is to be found thy greatest honour, interest, and pleasure, and, in a word, thy whole happiness both for time and eternity.

SECOND MONDAY IN LENT.

On the necessity of Prayer.

1. All Christians are indispensably obliged to prayer; because it is an homage and worship we owe to God. He is our first beginning and our last end; He is the inexhaustible source of all our good; therefore He justly expects we should daily worship Him, and daily acknowledge our total dependence on Him by diligent application to Him by prayer. We are all bound, both by our creation and redemption, frequently to present ourselves before the throne of God with acts of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; we are all bound to honour Him by frequent acts of faith, hope, and love; and it is in and by prayer we perform these duties; they are all neglected if prayer be neglected. It was appointed in the divine law, that twice every

day, morning and evening, an unspotted lamb should be offered in sacrifice in the temple of God as a daily worship He expected from His people ; and shall not the children of the new law be equally obliged, twice a day at least, to offer up their homage of prayer in the temple of their hearts ? Daniel chose rather to be cast into the den of the lions than not worship his God, by prayer, three times a day. And shall not this convince Christians of the strict necessity of this exercise.

2. Consider the necessity of prayer, inasmuch as it is, by divine appointment, the channel through which the graces and blessings of God are to flow into our souls. We can do nothing towards our salvation without the grâce of God ; but with His grace we can do all things. Now prayer is the great means of procuring and obtaining this all-necessary grace ; "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you." How often is this repeated and inculcated in holy writ ! How much are we there pressed to be earnest and fervent in prayer ! Does our God then stand in need of us, or of our prayers ? No, certainly. He stands not in need of us, but we continually stand in need of Him ; and therefore out of love to us, He is so often pressing us to pray, because He sees that without frequent and fervent prayer we must be for ever miserable. Blessed be His name for this His infinite charity !

3. Consider the necessity of prayer from the warfare in which we are engaged the whole time of our mortal pilgrimage, with three most desperate enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are surrounded with dangers on all sides, and with dangers that threaten us with nothing less than the loss of God, and a miserable eternity. We walk in the midst of snares ; our way is beset with robbers and murderers ; we breathe a pestilential air ; we live in a world that is very wicked, in the midst of worldlings, a deluded people who are strangers to the gospel, who by word and work encourage sin, and seek to drag us along with them into the broad road of perdition. We carry about with us a load of flesh which weighs down the poor soul, and tyrannises over her with its passions and lusts ; these hold correspondence with the third enemy, the devil, and are ever ready to betray us to him, to make us his companions in never-ending woe. We have whole legions of his wicked angels to fight against, crafty and malicious spirits, bent upon sparing no pains to destroy us. And what shall we do ? Or what can we do, to escape all these dangers, and overcome all these enemies ? We must watch and pray ; and God will watch over us, and give us the victory over them all. Prayer will engage God on our side, and all our enemies shall fall before us ; for if God be with us, who shall be against us ?

Conclusion. Have recourse to prayer in all dangers and temptations ; and since our whole life is full of dangers and

temptations let us make our whole life, as much as possible, a life of prayer.

SECOND TUESDAY IN LENT.

On attention in Prayer.

1. The most essential condition to make our prayer either acceptable to God, or beneficial to ourselves, is serious attention. It deserves not the name of prayer without it. To pray with wilful distractions is a mockery; it is affronting the Divine Majesty. "This people," saith He, "honoureth Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me" (Isa. xxix.). See, my soul, if this be not too often thy case? And if so, seek a speedy remedy for so great an evil. There needs no greater to sink thee into the very depth of misery for time and eternity. For as he cannot fail to live well who has found the way to pray well, so he that prays ill must not expect to live well, or to die well.

2. In order to pray well, our heart and mind must go always along with what we are about, or, which is the best attention of all and most adapted to bring us to the love of God, our thoughts must then be fixed in God; not considered as abroad, but as within our own souls; not as represented by corporeal images, but as the Being of all beings, the eternal, incomprehensible, infinite truth. But that we may be better able to keep this attention in the time of prayer, we must hearken to the admonition of the wise man. "Before prayer prepare thy soul, and be not like a man that tempteth God." This preparing the soul for prayer consists in discharging beforehand, as much as possible, all foreign thoughts; restraining even at other times the rovings of the imagination, and vain amusements; untying the heart from its disorderly affections and beginning by a serious recollection of the soul in the presence of God, and an earnest address to Him to teach us and help us to pray as we ought.

3. If, after taking these precautions, we still find ourselves hurried away with a multitude of distractions in the time of prayer, we must not be discouraged. For, as long as our will has no share in these distractions, they will not be imputed to us, nor hinder the fruit of our prayers. It is the heart, it is the will that God regards; our care must be to keep this right, to set out at first with a good heart and will to seek our heavenly Father, and not to retract this by wilfully turning aside from Him; and we may be assured that He that seeks and sees the heart, will not be offended at the involuntary wanderings of the imagination, which can never separate the soul from Him.

Conclusion. Ever keep a close guard upon thy mind, and thy heart, if thou desire to pray well, and this not only at the time of prayer, but at all times. For if thou live in constant

dissipation of thought at other times, and with a heart set upon irregular affections and cheating vanities, how canst thou expect but that both thy mind and heart, in time of prayer, will be still running after those things they are accustomed to, and which they have unhappily made their treasure, instead of God?

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

On other conditions of Prayer.

1. Consider those words of St. James (iv. 3), "You ask and you receive not, because you ask amiss." Great promises are made in holy writ in favour of prayer, but these are to be understood, provided we ask for what we ought, and in the manner we ought. But if we are more concerned for the temporal goods of this transitory life than for the eternal welfare of our souls, and make such things as those the principal subjects of our prayers, we must not think much if God does not hear us. For in these cases, we often know not what we ask, or we know not at least what is expedient for us, and it is a mercy of God not to grant us those things which, if He were to grant, might occasion the loss of our souls. In our prayer we must seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and as to other things, God will give us them as far as He sees expedient for us. And if at any time we pray for such things, or pray to be delivered from sufferings and crosses, we must ever pray with submission and conformity to the will of God; if it be His will, and if He sees it expedient, and not otherwise. Not my will, but Thy will be done.

2. We must not only pray for such things as are truly good, as being agreeable to God's holy will, and conducive to our true and everlasting welfare, but we must also pray in a proper manner; that is, with a pure intention, and with a lively faith and confidence in God. Great promises are made in Scripture to prayer, but it is to prayer made with faith and confidence in God. The honour of His Divine Majesty is engaged to stand by those who pray with a strong belief and trust in Him. But as for him that prayeth "wavering in faith, let Him not think that He shall receive any thing from the Lord" (James i. 6). If then we would pray to the purpose, we must come before God with a lively sense of His boundless power, goodness, and mercy, with a conviction of His being ever faithful to His promises, and that His divine truth cannot fail. And we must not trust in the least in ourselves, nor ground ourselves upon any merits of our own, but put an entire confidence in God, who is more desirous to give us His grace than we are to ask it, and we shall quickly experi-

ence how ready He will be to show us mercy and to hear our prayers. So true it is, that no one ever trusted in Him and was confounded.

3. In order to obtain our requests, we must take care to present them in the name of Jesus Christ, and through the merits of His death and passion. What we ask of God is mercy, grace, and salvation; now, faith assures us, there is no means of obtaining mercy, grace, or salvation, but through Jesus Christ. "No one can come to the Father but by Him" (John xiv. 6). "Whatsoever we ask the Father in His name, shall be given to us" (chap. xvi. 23, 24). And, "there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). Here then is the great ground of that faith and confidence with which we draw near to God, and address our prayers to Him. The Son of God has died for us, He has made over to us the merits of His death and passion, He has purchased for us those graces which we pray for, His blood continually pleads in our behalf. Through Him, then, "let us go with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid" (Heb. iv. 10).

Conclusion. Take the blood of Christ along with you as often as you desire to go within the veil, by prayer, into the sanctuary of God; this will open to you the way to all mercy, grace, and salvation.

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

On fervour in Prayer.

1. Consider the necessity of fervour in prayer; that is to say, that we should be quite in earnest in our addresses to God. For how can we expect that God should hear or regard our supplications when we present them with such indolence and indifference; as if we told the Almighty we did not care whether He heard us or no? Such lukewarm prayer as this, instead of drawing down His blessing upon us, will rather move Him to indignation. It is doing the work of God negligently, which is a thing of the worst of consequences to a Christian soul. Fervour and eagerness in prayer is recommended to us by the great example of the Son of God, "who in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offered up His prayers and supplications" (Heb. v. 7). It is recommended by the doctrine and example of the saints. Not fervour of the imagination, but of the will; not expressed by the motion of the head, or any outward gestures of the body, but consisting in the strong desires of the soul, suing with all her power for the mercy and grace of God.

2. Consider how our Lord recommends us (Luke xviii. 1), "that we should always pray, and not to faint;" that is, not to be discouraged, or to give over, if we do not immediately find the effect of our prayers; but by the example of the poor widow, whose importunity prevailed even upon a wicked judge, still continue to knock at the gate of heaven till God is pleased to open to us, according to His merciful promise. Perseverance in prayer and a holy importunity were the means by which the Saints obtained such great things of God. It is well if the want of these be not the true reason why we are not favoured in the like manner. The hand of God is certainly not shortened. But alas! we have not that faith, that fervour, that perseverance which they had, who, like their Lord, passed sometimes even whole nights in prayer.

3. Nothing contributes more to render our prayers effectual with God than a profound humility. A contrite and humble heart, God never despises. "The prayer of him that humbles himself," saith the wise man (Eccl. xxxv. 21), "shall pierce the clouds—and not depart till the Most High behold." Humility always finds admittance with God, who ever resists the proud, and gives His grace to the humble. If then, my soul, thou desire that thy prayers should find admittance, see they be ever accompanied with humility. "I will speak to my Lord," said holy Abraham (Gen. xviii. 27), "whereas I am but dust and ashes." Alas! poor soul of mine, thy whole being is a mere nothing in the sight of that great God, before whom thou presentest thyself in prayer. His majesty fills heaven and earth, and both heaven and earth dwindle away to nothing in His presence. But what a figure then do thy crimes and abominations make in His eyes! and how wretched an object do they make of thee! See then what pressing motives thou hast to humble thyself in prayer, in consideration of thy sins, and of what thou hast deserved by them. Nothing but humble prayer can remedy all thy evils, and this will effectually do it.

Conclusion. Ever pray with fervour and humility, and in order thereto, always begin thy prayer by placing thyself in the presence of God and humbly imploring the assistance of His Divine Spirit. None but He can teach thee to pray well.

FRIDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

On Mental Prayer.

1. Consider that the great advantages and excellence of prayer, are found chiefly in mental prayer; that is to say, in such kind of prayer as is not confined to any form of words, but is made in the secret closet of the heart, where the soul, all alone, finds her God and entertains herself with Him. The advantages of this

kind of prayer, beyond that which is only vocal, are, it brings us nearer to God and to His heavenly light ; it employs all the powers of the soul, the memory, the understanding, and the will, about Him ; it opens the eyes of the soul to the knowledge of God, and of ourselves ; and is the true school in which we learn to despise the world and its cheating vanities, and to love God with our whole hearts. See, my soul, thou daily frequent this school of divine love !

2. The Saints, and other masters of the spiritual life, have prescribed certain rules and methods of mental prayer, with a variety of subjects, to make the practice easy. According to these rules and methods, the soul begins by placing herself in the presence of God, and humbly imploring His divine assistance. Then the memory represents the subject of the prayer, and the understanding is employed in considering the heavenly truths discovered therein, till the will is properly affected and stirred up to the fear and love of God, to a humble confidence in His goodness, to a sense of gratitude for His benefits, to a horror of sin, to a sincere repentance for past offences, and such like affections, which ought to be followed by good and firm resolutions of avoiding evil and doing good, and, in particular, of the immediate amendment of such failings as one is most subject to. Such is the method of mental prayer, by way of meditation, recommended by St. Ignatius, St. Francis de Sales, and other Saints, and both very easy and beneficial to Christian souls, by serving greatly to enlighten their understanding and inflame their will. Give thanks, my soul, to thy God, for the lights He has communicated to His Saints, to direct thee in this sovereign exercise of mental prayer ; and particularly practise what they recommend, with regard to insisting principally in thy prayer, upon affections and resolutions, lest otherwise thy meditations fall short of answering the chief end of prayer, which is the love of God and the amendment of thy life.

3. Although this method of mental prayer be excellent, and such as ought to be followed where the soul does not find herself invited and attracted another way ; yet as "the Spirit breatheth where He will" (John iii. 8), and as we must not pretend to set bounds or give rules to Him who expects to be ever acknowledged as sovereign Lord and King within our souls, and to establish His reign there by mental prayer : if He should be pleased to advance the soul to the more perfect prayer of contemplation (in which she finds herself drawn nearer to God, quite alone with Him, and absorbed in His love), she must not be restrained by any of these usual forms or methods from following that happy call, and thankfully yielding herself a captive to divine love. For it must ever be the rule of the soul, which desires to have the kingdom of God established in her interior, by way of mental prayer, to follow God in His divine attractions ;

yet so as to take a guide along with her for fear of being imposed upon, through mistaking the suggestions of Satan, or of her own pride and self-love, for the motions of the Spirit of God.

Conclusion. Exercise thyself daily in mental prayer, as the great means to bring thee to God. Let no pretext of business call thee from this exercise; nothing can be of half so much importance to thy true welfare; it is the very way to heaven. The morning is the best time for it, and half an hour at least ought to be dedicated to it.

SATURDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

On the practice of mental Prayer.

1. Consider the great error of many Christians, who imagine the practice of mental prayer to be very difficult, and therefore are discouraged from undertaking this exercise by the vain apprehension of not being able to succeed in it; an error which the devil endeavours to propagate with all his power, because he fears nothing more than mental prayer, as being the direct ruin of his usurpation, and the establishment of the kingdom of God in the soul. To confute this error, and to take away this prejudice against so necessary an exercise, reflect that there is no such mystery in mental prayer as people vainly imagine; that it consists in considerations and affections, that is, in thinking and loving; and this, in thinking on subjects generally the most easy, and the most copious that can be, and at the same time, of the utmost importance to the soul; and in loving Him, whom by thinking on we find to be most worthy of our love. We can easily think of our other affairs, and even of every trifle that comes in our way; nay, thinking is so natural to us that we cannot help thinking of something whenever we are awake. And shall thinking then be difficult only when it regards matters of the utmost consequence to our everlasting welfare? Or shall loving be difficult to a soul that was made to love, and that never can find rest but in her love; and whom God, by His grace, is continually inviting and pressing to love Him?

2. The subjects for mental prayer, which are the most necessary, are withal the most easy, such as those that are recommended by St. Teresa, in her writings, and by her own practice; viz., "the true knowledge of ourselves, and what we are, both as mortals and as sinners; how much we owe to God; how much we have offended Him, and how ungrateful we still are to Him; what He is, and how much He loveth us, and what He hath done for us; the great humiliations and sufferings of the Son of God for our redemption from sin and Satan; the sudden vanishing of all present things, and the eternal punishments and rewards to come."

Such meditations as these are no way difficult or abstruse, but easy for every capacity, and withal open a wide field for the soul to expatiate in; and from these it will be easy for her to pass on to a variety of pious affections, suitable to the subject of the meditation. But more especially such considerations as these serve for enkindling in the soul the love of God, and a desire of being grateful to Him, and of never more offending Him, when we reflect what He, the Lord of glory, infinite in majesty, has done and suffered for us, poor wretches as we are, to deliver us from such torments as we had deserved, and to purchase for us such glory, of His own pure mercy and goodness.

3. Consider that it is also easy for the soul to practise mental prayer, and the way of familiar colloquies or entertainments with our Lord, conversing and discoursing with Him, as we would do if we had Him visibly present with us, as He was amongst men in His mortal life; treating with Him as with a parent, a friend, a benefactor, as with our high priest, our advocate, our physician, our director, our brother, our spouse, our head, our Redeemer; sometimes humbling ourselves before Him, confessing and begging pardon for our many disloyalties; at other times representing to Him our many infirmities; reminding Him of His promises, thanking Him for His great patience towards us, condoling with Him in His sufferings, and the daily affronts He receives from obstinate sinners; promising a new life for the future; offering all that we have, and our whole being to Him; petitioning Him for our many spiritual wants and necessities, for, "since we never want words," saith St. Teresa, "to talk with other persons, why should we, to speak with God?" And surely none can want matter to converse and discourse about with Him, but such as think they owe nothing to Him, and neither here nor hereafter desire or expect anything from Him.

Conclusion. Let no apprehension of difficulties discourage thee from the daily practice of mental prayer. The grace of God will make it easy to thee, if thou continue resolute in using thy best endeavours. Be not frightened if thou meet with nothing at first but dryness and distractions; let thy will be good and these will not hurt thee; God, in His good time, will let the light of His countenance shine upon thee. By perseverance in this exercise, thou wilt at length dig out a treasure, which will abundantly recompense whatever labour thou hast taken in searching for it.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

On devotion to the Passion of Christ.

1. Meditating on the sufferings and death of our Redeemer ought to be a principal part of the Christian's devotion during the time of Lent. For the season approaches in which we cele

brate the yearly memory of our Lord's passion, and therefore the Church, which at no time can forget the sufferings and death of her heavenly Spouse, at this time particularly recommends to her children, to set before their eyes their crucified Saviour, and to make Him the great object of their devotion. His passion is the ever-flowing source of mercy, grace, and salvation to us; all our good must be derived from His cross; therefore the more we approach Him in His sufferings, and station ourselves near the cross, by pious meditation on His passion, the more plentifully shall we partake of the mercy and grace which flow continually from those fountains of life, His precious wounds. The great design of Lent is, that the sinner should now return to God and sue for pardon and mercy; and what better means can he have for this than by taking with him to the throne of mercy the blood of Christ, by daily meditating on His passion?

2. The passion of Christ has been always, from the beginning of the world, the great object of the devotion of the children of God: in all the sacrifices of old, of oxen and sheep, they celebrated beforehand the death of the Lamb of God, slain in figure from the beginning of the world. And as, from the time of the fall of Adam, no grace could come to any man but through the merits of the death and passion of our Redeemer, whose future coming was revealed to man immediately after his fall; so, no sacrifices could ever be acceptable to God, but such as had relation to Him, and were offered through faith in Him. Much more under the new law, are the faithful obliged to make the passion of Christ the great object of their devotion, since He has instituted the eucharistic sacrifice and sacrament, and left us therein the sacred mysteries of His body and blood; for this very end, that in our most solemn worship we should have always before our eyes His passion and death. See, my soul, how much thy God desires thou shouldst remember what He has suffered for thee! And why? Doubtless that by this means thou mightest be confirmed in His love. Blessed be His goodness for ever!

3. Consider how ungrateful all such Christians are, as forget the sufferings and death of their Redeemer. May they not be reckoned in the number of those of whom He complained of old, by the royal prophet, that they left Him alone in His passion, and took no notice of Him. "I looked on My right hand, and beheld, and there was no one that would know Me" (Ps. cxii.). Had the meanest man upon earth suffered but the tenth part of what our Lord suffered, for the love of one of us, we should be basely ungrateful if we ever forgot his sufferings and his love. What then must we think of ourselves, if we forget the unspeakable sufferings and infinite love of the Son of God Himself, nailed to a cross, to deliver us by His death from the eternal torments of hell? Ah! Christians, let us never be so ungrateful!

Conclusion. O my soul, at this holy time at least, daily accompany thy crucified Jesus by meditations on His sufferings. "With Christ I am nailed to the cross," said St. Paul (Gal. ii. 12). "My love is nailed to the cross," said St. Ignatius, the martyr. Oh, that like these generous lovers, we could always adhere to our crucified God!

MONDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT.

On the great advantages of devotion to the Passion of Christ.

1. The consideration of the passion of Christ is the sovereign means of all good to Christian souls. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up," saith our Lord to Nicodemus (John iii. 14, 15), "that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life." As then looking at the brazen serpent which was a figure of the death of Christ, was the means by divine appointment to heal the Israelites who were bitten by the fiery serpents sent among them for their sins, and to rescue them from temporal death; so the contemplation of the passion of Christ is the great means to heal Christian souls from the bite of the infernal serpent, and to deliver them from everlasting death. Every sinner who looks for mercy, must return to God with his whole heart, and that by faith, hope, love, and repentance. Now it is in meditating on the passion of Christ we contemplate the great object of our faith; the chiefest ground of our hope; the most pressing motive of divine love; and the strongest and most effectual inducement to repentance for our sins. Let us embrace then this great means of bringing us to God, and to all good.

2. Consider that as the belief of Christ crucified is the fundamental article of the Christian's faith, so it has the greatest influence on our justification; according to that of the Apostle (Rom. iii. 23–25), "that we all have sinned and need the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God had proposed to be A PROPITIATION THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD," &c. It is then through faith in His blood we are to be brought to the divine mercy; and it is by meditation on His passion we are to be filled with a lively faith in His blood. Thus, devotion to the passion of Christ is the shortest way to come at justifying faith. It has no less influence on our hope, by setting before our eyes how much God has loved us in giving His only Son; and the great grounds we have to look for all good through Him. For as the Apostle writes (Rom. viii. 32.), "He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, hath He not also with Him given us all things." What an earnest indeed has God given us of all mercy, grace, and salvation, in the blood of

His Son! What may not poor sinners hope for from such and so great a Redeemer, if they apply to this sacred passion by daily meditation, and offer up their humble supplications to His Father, through Him and His infinite merits.

3. Consider that as nothing contributes so effectually to our justification and sanctification as the love of God, so nothing contributes more effectually to excite this heavenly love in our souls than devotion to the passion of Christ; for there we must clearly discover the incomprehensible goodness of God, and the inexhaustible treasures of His divine love for us. This excites in us a desire of returning love for love, life for life. This attracts us, like Magdalene, to the feet of our crucified Saviour, with an earnest desire to wash them with penitential tears, flowing from and enlivened by divine love. This makes us grieve for our past ingratitude, in having had hitherto so little sense of His goodness and love; this makes us lament the share our sins have had in nailing Him to the cross; this teaches us to offer our whole hearts to Him, in order to make Him the best amends we can by loving Him henceforward both in time and eternity. Thus devotion to the passion of Christ introduces that penitential love to which our Lord attributes the remission of sins, when he says of Magdalene (Luke vii. 47), "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much."

Conclusion. Station thyself at the foot of the cross, and by daily contemplation of the sufferings of thy Redeemer so exercise thy soul in faith, hope, love, and repentance, as to secure to thyself mercy, grace, and salvation.

TUESDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT.

On the lessons Christ teaches in His Passion.

1. Devotion to the passion of our Lord brings with it other great advantages to the soul, inasmuch as it teaches us many excellent lessons for regulating our lives according to His blessed example. The Son of God came down from heaven, not only to shed His blood for our ransom, but also to give Himself to us as a perfect pattern of all virtues for us to follow in the practice of our lives; that so the image of God in man, which had been disfigured by sin, might be repaired and reformed according to this great original. Now, although the whole life of Christ was full of admirable examples of all Christian virtues, yet they nowhere shine forth more brightly than in His passion, in which He has drawn, as it were, under one view all the great lessons of virtue He had taught in His life, both by His words and His works. Thus the passion of Christ is the great school the Christian must frequent, by devout meditation, if he desire to learn the virtues of His Redeemer He must look on by contemplation, and execute

in work what he sees in this devout pattern, which his Lord here shows him on Mount Calvary, if he desire to make his soul a tabernacle for the living God. As it was said to Moses when he was to make the tabernacle of the covenant: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern which was shown thee on the Mount" (Heb. viii. 5).

2. Consider what the lessons are that Christ more particularly desires to teach us in His passion. The Apostle informs us (Phil. ii. 5, 8) that they are principally His obedience and His humility. "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross," and this, that we might learn to be of the like mind. Let us study well these great lessons. Adam fell from God by disobedience; to gratify himself he transgressed the holy law of God, and so entailed both sin and death upon his offspring. By the obedience of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, we are delivered from sin and death, but on condition of learning and practising His obedience, and that also unto death, by a constant and perpetual will of keeping the commandments of God at all events, and of rather dying than transgressing His holy law. This is the obedience that Christ expects we should learn from His cross, so as to be ever willing to part even with our dearest affections rather than offend our God, and to submit to any sufferings whatsoever rather than disobey. This is true Christian obedience, and nothing less will bring us to God. My soul, thou must learn this lesson at the foot of the cross.

3. Consider what a lesson of humility Christ has given us in the whole course of His passion, becoming therein "as a worm and no man; the reproach of men and the outcast of the people" (Ps. xxi. 7). See how He humbled Himself, under the malediction of our sins, in His prayer in the garden. How He humbled Himself in suffering with silence all manner of calumnies, affronts, and disgraces. How He humbled Himself under those ignominious and infamous torments of scourging at the pillar, crowning with thorns, and His carriage of the cross. In fine, how He humbled Himself in being crucified between two thieves, and in dying that most disgraceful death of the cross. But who is this, my soul, that thus humbles Himself and makes Himself mean and contemptible for thee? Why, He is the Lord of glory, the Most High, the great King of heaven and earth. And why does He thus debase Himself? It is to teach thee His humility—a lesson so necessary that without learning it thou canst never please God, nor have any part with Him.

Conclusion. Study well these necessary lessons by daily attendance upon our Lord in His passion. He came down from heaven to be our teacher, and His cross is the pulpit from which He most feelingly and effectually preaches to our souls.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

On other lessons to be learned from Christ in His Passion.

1. In the passion of Christ, His meekness is no less admirable than His humility. These two He jointly recommended in life, to be learned of Him (Matt. xi. 29). And these two He jointly taught in death, by His great example. "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before His shearer he opened not His mouth" (Isa. liii. 7). "The Lord God hath opened My ear," saith He (Isa. l. 5, 6), "and I do not resist—I have given My body to the strikers, and My cheeks to them that plucked them: I have turned not away My face from them that rebuked Me, and spit upon Me." And why all this, but to leave us an example that we should follow His steps (1 Pet. ii. 21, 23), "who when He was reviled did not revile; when He suffered He threatened not; but delivered Himself to them that judged Him unjustly." Let us learn from the consideration of the behaviour of our Lord in His sufferings, to suppress all the risings of our passion and pride, and to imitate His meekness and silence; who in the midst of affronts and injuries of all kinds, "became as a man that heareth not, and as a dumb man, not opening his mouth."

2. Consider that devotion to the passion of Christ is the great means to teach a Christian patience, under all the crosses and sufferings we are exposed to during our mortal pilgrimage. We cannot live without crosses and sufferings; and in our patience under them, we are to possess our souls (Luke xxi. 19). Patience both sweetens and sanctifies all our sufferings; patience is necessary for us, that doing the will of God, we may receive the promise (Heb. x. 36). Patience hath a perfect work; that we may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing (James i. 4). As none hath ever gone to heaven but by the way of the cross, so none can ever come thither without patience. Now this all-necessary virtue of patience is best learned in the school of the passion of Christ; by the consideration of the multitude and variety of His sufferings; and the manner with which He endures all for the love of us. How shall a sinner who has deserved hell for his crimes pretend to complain, or think much of any sufferings in life or death, when by serious meditation he sets before his eyes the far greater sufferings of the innocent Lamb of God, endured with unwearied patience for his sins?

3. Consider what further lessons are to be learned from the contemplation of the passion of Christ. 1. Of charity for our enemies; by considering the Son of God, praying for them that crucified Him, and dying for His enemies. 2. Of perfect resignation, and conformity in all things to the holy will of God; by

the great example of the prayer of our Lord in His agony, "Not My will but Thine be done," and the consideration of the great sacrifice He made of Himself to His Father upon the cross, without the least reserve. 3. Of the spirit of voluntary mortification and self-denial; by seeing how the Son of God allows himself no ease or comfort in His sufferings; but both in life and death makes choice of what is most disagreeable to natural inclination. O my soul, these are necessary lessons indeed. See thou study them well at the foot of the cross; sitting under the shadow of thy beloved. O dear Jesus, do Thou by Thy eternal grace teach me effectually these virtues, by that mercy and love that nailed Thee to the cross.

Conclusion. Love and bless thy God for having sent thee so excellent a Master from heaven to teach thee the way thither by His sufferings and death. Let these be always before thy eyes, and thou shalt never miss thy way.

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

On the love that Christ has shown us in His Passion.

1. Consider those words of our Saviour (John xx. 13), "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And, indeed, history scarcely furnishes any instances of a friendship so perfect, as that one friend should be willing to lay down his life for another. But, O divine Saviour of our souls, how imperfect is all human friendship compared with Thine! what love between man and man could ever bear the least comparison with that divine charity which burned in Thy sacred breast, and which obliged Thee to offer up Thyself in sacrifice, in the midst of all kinds of ignominies and the very worst of torments, for Thy very enemies; for those very wretches who crucified Thee; for us miserable sinners, who were like to make no better return for all Thy love and for all Thy sufferings than sin and ingratitude; and to that degree as scarcely ever to think of Thy sufferings, or thank Thee for them; but rather by repeated treasons, to be daily treading under foot Thy precious blood? O blessed by all creatures for evermore, be this infinite goodness, and love of our dearest Redeemer! O my dear Saviour, I beseech Thee by all this love, and by all the precious blood which Thou hast so lovingly shed for me, that Thou wouldst never more suffer me to be thus ungrateful to Thee.

2. Consider what the world would think of a prince, the only son and heir of some great monarch, who should entertain such love and friendship for one of the meanest of his slaves, as to offer himself to die a cruel and ignominious death, to rescue his slave from the just punishment of his crimes. Would not all mankind

stand amazed at such extraordinary love? And this much more, if the crime for which this slave was condemned to die, were no less than a treasonable conspiracy against this prince, by whom he was so tenderly beloved. Ah! Christian souls, this is but a faint resemblance, a very imperfect image, of that inconceivable and inexpressible love, which our Saviour has shown to us, in laying down His life upon the cross, to rescue us His ungrateful creatures, rebels, and traitors to Him and His Father, from the eternal torments of hell, which we have a thousand times deserved by our treasons against Him. For as there is an infinite distance between the sovereign majesty of God and any of His creatures, how dignified soever; so there is between that love which our God has shown in dying for us worms of the earth and slaves of hell, and that love which would oblige one mortal to die for another. O dear Jesus, never suffer me to forget this love which Thou hast shown me! Give me grace to return Thee love for love.

3. Consider how truly sweet our Lord has shown Himself to us in His passion, and how rich in mercy. For supposing it was His pleasure to deliver us from sin and hell, He could have brought this about with the same ease with which He created all things out of nothing; one only word, one act of His would have been sufficient; or if He must needs suffer, and shed His blood for our redemption, one drop alone of His sacred blood, by reason of the infinite dignity of His divine person, would have been enough to atone for all the sins of ten thousand worlds. But this infinite love for us, and the desire He had to gain our hearts, and to oblige us to love Him, would not be content with this, nor with anything less than with pouring out the last drop of His most sacred blood, by suffering for us the worst of torments, and the worst of deaths. O infinite Goodness, how little art Thou considered by us here! How astonishing shalt Thou appear to the saints and angels for all eternity!

Conclusion. Wonder at the ingratitude and insensibility of Christians, who make professions of believing this infinite goodness, mercy, and love, and yet are so little touched with it, or restrained by the consideration of it, from going on, daily crucifying their Lord with their sins. O divine love, let me never be so unhappy! Let me never forget Thee. Come and take full possession of my soul; and let nothing in life or death ever separate me from Thee.

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

Other considerations to excite in the soul the love of our suffering Jesus.

1. Consider how affectionate is the love that Christ bears us in His passion. It is stronger than death; He loves us more than His own life, since He parts with it for the love of us. It is more tender than the love of the tenderest mother; since He voluntarily suffers the pangs of death to give us life; He sheds His blood to cleanse our souls from sin; He offers His own body in sacrifice to be our victim, our ransom, and our food. At the very time He is suffering and dying for us, He has every one of us in His heart; He embraces each with incomparable affection; weeps over each one, prays for each one, and pours out His blood for each one, no less than if He had suffered for that one alone. O my soul! had we then a place in the heart of Jesus, when He was hanging upon the cross? and shall we ever refuse Him a place in our heart? No, dear Saviour, my heart is Thine; it desires nothing better than to be for ever a servant of Thy love.

2. Consider how effectual is the love that Christ shows us in His passion; it contents itself not with words or professions of affection, nor with such passing sentiments of tenderness as we imagine we have for Him in certain fits of devotion, at times when nothing occurs for us to suffer for His sake; but it shows itself by its effects, by His taking upon Himself all our evils, to procure effectually all good for us. His love made Him divest Himself of all His beauty and comeliness, and hide all His glory and majesty, that He might become for us despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity (Isa. iii.). He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows out of pure love. He has made Himself, for the love of us, as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. He was wounded for our iniquities, and bruised for our sins. All we like sheep were gone astray, and the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was offered because it was His own will. And it was His own will, because He loved us, and desired to transfer upon Himself the punishment due to us, that He might deliver us from the wrath to come, and open to us the fountains of mercy, grace, and life. This was an effectual love indeed. Does our love for Him show itself by the like effects? Are we willing to renounce our own will, to mortify our inclinations and passions, to suffer and bear our cross for Him? A generous lover is as willing to be with him on mount Calvary as on mount Thabor: is this our disposition?

3. Consider how disinterested is the love that Christ shows us in His passion. He loves us without any merit on our side; we

deserve nothing from Him but hell. He loves us without any prospect of gain to Himself from us, or any return that we can make Him ; we can give Him nothing but what He must first give us ; we can offer Him no good thing but what His love has purchased for us ; we can have nothing but what is His. He stands in no need at all of us or our goods. Oh how truly generous is this love of our Redeemer in His passion ! How bountiful is He to us ! He makes over to us the infinite treasures of His merits ; He wants them not for Himself, but bequeaths them all to us. His love for us knows no bounds. It possessed His heart from the first instant of His conception ; it burned there every moment of His life ; it carried Him through all His sufferings even to death. It is without beginning or end, it endures from eternity to eternity. O bright fire, mayest thou take possession of my soul for time and eternity !

Conclusion. Since thou canst make no better return, offer at least daily thy heart with all its affections to thy loving Saviour. But that it may be worthy of His acceptance, beg that He would cleanse it by His precious blood, and inflame it with His love.

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

On the sufferings of our Saviour before His Passion.

1. Consider how true that is of the devout Author of the Following of Christ : the whole life of Christ was a Cross and a Martyrdom. He came into the world to be a victim for our sins ; and from the first instant of His conception in His mother's womb, He offered Himself to all the sufferings He was to undergo in life and death. Hear how He then addressed Himself to His Father (Ps. xxxix. 7, 8), "Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire, but thou hast pierced ears for me. Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou didst not require : then said I, behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me, that I should do thy will : O my God, I have desired it, and thy law is in the midst of my heart." And what was this will and this law, which from His first conception He embraced in the midst of His heart ; but that instead of all other sacrifices He should become Himself both our priest and victim, and through His sufferings should mediate our peace, and reconcile us to His Father ? Thus He accepted beforehand all that He was afterwards to endure ; and by the clear and distinct foresight, which He had all along of His whole passion, suffered in some measure all His lifetime, what afterwards He endured at His death. Oh how early did my Jesus embrace His cross for the love of me ! Oh how early did I prefer my pleasures before His love !

2. Consider some other sufferings which our Lord went through

in the course of His mortal life. His nine months' confinement in His mother's womb, most sensible to Him, who from His first conception had the perfect use of reason, and who by a violence which He offered to His zeal and love, was kept so long from action. The hardships He endured at His birth from the rigour of the season and the poverty of His surroundings, His circumcision, His flight into Egypt, the sense He had of the murder of the Innocents, the austerity of His life, His frequent hunger, thirst, and want, His labours and fatigues. But all this was nothing to what His boundless charity and His zeal for the honour of His Father and the salvation of souls made Him continually suffer, from the sight and knowledge of the sins of men. He had all the sins of the world before His eyes, the whole time of His life, with all their enormity, and opposition to the infinite majesty and sanctity of God and His divine honour and glory, and the dreadful havoc they did, and would make in the souls of men, with all the dismal consequences of them, both in time and eternity; and this sight which was always present to Him, was infinitely more grievous to His soul than the very pangs of death. For if St. Paul had such a sense of the evil of sin, as to be quite on fire when he saw any one fall into sin (2 Cor. xi. 29), how much more did this fire consume our Saviour?

3. Consider how much our Lord suffered from being obliged to live and converse amongst men, whose manners were so widely different from, and so infinitely opposite to His; how sensibly He was touched with the crying disorders of the Jews, amongst whom He lived; with their malice, their violence, their injustice, their deceits, their blasphemies, and the licentiousness of their lives, the pride, ambition, covetousness, and hypocrisy of the priests, scribes, and Pharisees, their oppression of the poor, their contempt of virtue and of truth, and their general forgetfulness of God and their salvation. Add to this, how keenly He must have been afflicted with the hardness of heart with which they resisted His grace, their obstinacy in their evil ways, their ingratitude, the opposition they made to His heavenly Gospel, their blasphemous judgments of His person and miracles, their slanders and murmurings against Him, and their continually laying snares for Him, and persecuting Him even unto death. Oh, who can sufficiently apprehend how much our Saviour's soul was affected by all these evils; with the reception and treatment He met with from His chosen people, and with those dreadful judgments they were thereby drawing down upon their own heads, instead of that mercy which He came to purchase for them by His blood! Death itself was not so painful to Him.

Conclusion. If thou wouldst be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, conform thyself to a life of crosses and sufferings; thus shalt thou wear His livery, and be entitled to a share in His heavenly

kingdom. If we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him: yet so, if we suffer with His spirit.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

On our Saviour's Prayer in the Garden.

1. Consider that our Saviour's passion began the night before His death; when, after having eaten the paschal lamb with His disciples, humbly washed their feet, instituted the great passover of the new covenant, and given them, in an admirable sacrament of love, His most own precious body and blood, He went out with them unto mount Olivet; the place to which He was accustomed to resort, after the preaching and labours of the day, to spend the evening, if not the whole night, in prayer. Thither He went on this His last night to prepare Himself for His passion by prayer; not for any need He had of it for Himself, but to give us an example, and for our instruction. Learn, my soul, by this great example, how thou art to arm thyself against all trials and temptations. Learn from whence all thy strength is to come in the time of battle. Give ear to what our Lord said to His disciples upon this occasion (Matt. xxvi. 41): "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Take heed, lest, if thou sleep, as Peter did, when thou shouldst pray, thou deny thy Lord when thou comest to the trial.

2. Consider how our Saviour began to disclose to His disciples the mortal anguish, fear, and sadness, which He then suffered in His soul. "My soul," saith He, "is sorrowful, even unto death," that is to say, with a sadness which is capable of even now taking away My life, if I did not, by miracle, support Myself for enduring the other torments of My passion. Sweet Jesus, what can be the meaning of this! Didst thou not, from the first instant of life, accept of and embrace, in the midst of Thy heart, all that Thou art now going to suffer; forasmuch as it would be for the glory of the Father, and the redemption of man? Hadst thou not even a longing desire of accomplishing this great sacrifice of our redemption? And how comes it that Thou art now thus oppressed with sadness and anguish? Where is that courage and fortitude which Thou hast imparted to Thy martyrs, which has made even tender maids despise the worst of torments, when they endured them for the love of Thee? And shalt thou, who art the strength of the martyrs, shrink at the fear of death? But oh! I very well understand that it is by Thy own choice Thou hast condescended to all this sadness, fear, and anguish; it is to the end that Thou mightest suffer the more for me, and engage me to love Thee the more; it is that Thou mightest teach me how to behave under all my interior anguishes and afflictions, and how to endure them for the love of Thee.

3. Consider the prayer our Saviour made on this occasion, that if it were the will of His Father, the bitter cup might pass away from Him. But oh, with what fervour did He pray? "With a strong cry and tears" (Heb. v. 7). With what reverence and humility? Lying prostrate upon the ground (Matt. xxvi. 39). With what earnestness and perseverance? Continuing a long time in prayer, and repeating again and again the same supplication. Learn, my soul, to imitate Him under all thy distresses, betake thyself to prayer; but see thou pray as thy Lord did, with fervour, humility, and perseverance; see thou pray with the like resignation! Not my will, but Thine be done. Remember that in thy prayers thou art not to seek thy own pleasure or comfort, but the holy will of God. Make this holy will thy pleasure and comfort, and thy prayer will be always acceptable. "Stay ye here and watch with Me," said our Lord to His disciples; but every time He came to them, He found them still asleep; and no help or comfort had He from their company in His desolate condition. My soul, do thou at least pity thy Saviour under all this anguish and desolation; do thou stay and watch with Him, by frequent meditation on His sufferings.

Conclusion. Never forget what thy Saviour suffered for thee in His soul, during His prayer in the garden. No sufferings can be greater than such as immediately affect the soul. St. Teresa did not let a night pass, from her very childhood, without reflecting before she fell asleep on our Saviour's sufferings in that part of His passion; and by this means she gradually arrived at the perfection of mental prayer and of all holiness. Do thou the like.

MONDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On our Saviour's Agony and Bloody Sweat.

1. Consider what pangs, what anguish, what floods of sorrow, overwhelmed the soul of our dear Redeemer during His prayer in this His last night. Alas! no tongue can sufficiently express, nor heart conceive them! However, that thou mayest make some sort of judgment of them from their effects, consider how they cast Him into a mortal agony; how they forced from all His body a wonderful sweat of blood, which not only imbrued His garments, but also trickled down from His body upon the ground on which He lay prostrate in prayer. How inconceivable a torture must He have endured in His interior! when the pangs of His soul had so strong exterior operation and produced such strange effects in the body! But why all this agony, dear Lord? Why these pangs? Why this prodigious sweat of blood? Was not the death of the cross sufficient for our redemption? Why then these anticipated sorrows? Thy love alone can account for them. Oh, blessed be Thy infinite charity!

2. Consider how bitter were the ingredients of this chalice which our Saviour so much dreaded to drink. Ah! my soul, they were bitter indeed. He had at this time before His eyes a most lively apprehension, a most clear and express representation of all and every particular injury and indignity, stripe and torment, that He was afterwards successively to endure in the whole course of His passion now all at once assaulting His soul, and making Him feel beforehand all the sorrows which afterwards only came one by one. But what was more terrible to our Saviour, was the clear sight and lively sense He had then of all the sins and abominations of the whole world, from the first to the last, with all their filthiness and horror, all now laid upon Him as if they were His own, and Himself like the "emissary goat" (Lev. xvi. 21), charged with all the maledictions due to them, and with the wrath of His Father justly enkindled by them. Sweet Jesus, any one of these monsters is more odious to Thee than hell. And how then must Thou be affected when Thou not only hast before Thine eyes this infinite number of millions of millions of these odious monsters, mortal enemies of Thy Father, mustered up all against Thee, but also feelest their enormous weight laid upon Thy shoulders? Oh, what a share had my sins in this tragical scene! how did they repress the soul of my Redeemer! how did they force from Him this shower of blood, as if all the pores of His body were turned into eyes to weep for my sins! Let Thy agony and bloody sweat teach me effectually how heinous my sins are in Thy eyes, and in what manner I ought to bewail them.

3. Consider another bitter ingredient of that cup of thy Redeemer, which was the foresight He then had of the little sense the greater part even of Christians would have of all His sufferings, of their ingratitude for His infinite charity, of their abuse of those graces He was going to purchase for them with the last drop of His blood, of their perverseness in taking occasion from His very passion to sin more freely, and to draw down the more dreadful judgments upon their own heads; and, in fine, of the eternal loss of innumerable souls who, notwithstanding all His sufferings, through their obstinacy in sin and final impenitence, would incur the second and everlasting death. Consider that every one of those poor souls was more dear to Christ than His own life, since He parted with His life to save them. What cruel anguish, then, must it have been to His tender and loving heart, to see so many of them blindly and wilfully running into the bottomless pit of endless and irremediable evils, and plunging themselves for ever into the flames of hell. No wonder after this that so many lamentable objects presenting themselves at once before the eyes of His soul, and, joined with all those mentioned in the foregoing consideration, should cast Him into a mortal agony and bloody sweat.

Conclusion. Admire and adore the wondrous ways of God in

bringing about the redemption of man. Embrace with all the affection of thy heart the infinite charity of thy Redeemer, which shines forth so brightly in this mystery. And see thou be no longer one of that unhappy number who repay His mercy and love with sin and ingratitude.

TUESDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On the treason of Judas.

1. Consider how sensible an affliction it was to our Lord to be betrayed and sold by one of His own Apostles into the hands of those who sought His life. He who bore in silence all the insolence of the Jewish rabble and the pagan soldiers; He who suffered the whips, thorns, and nails without complaint, could not but complain of this treachery, ingratitude, and perfidiousness of a false friend, both in His words to His disciples the night before His passion, and to the traitor himself when he offered Him the treacherous kiss, and long before by the royal prophet. Hear how He expresses Himself in the Psalms: "Even the man of my peace" (the friend whom I had taken to my bosom), "in whom I trusted, who eat my bread" (even the bread of life), "hath greatly supplanted me" (Ps. xl. 10). And again, "If my enemy had reviled me, I would willingly have borne with it; and if he that hated me had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have hid myself from him." "But thou a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar, who didst take sweet meats together with me" (even the sacred body and blood of thy Redeemer), "in the house of God we walked with consent" (Ps. liv. 13, 14). Yes, I had associated thee to the communion of all My goods and graces in My Church; I had admitted thee to be one of My individual companions—a witness of My doctrine and miracles, even one of My twelve Apostles. And that thou, so highly favoured, without any merit of thine, shouldst be thus ungrateful, thus false and perfidious, as without any injury or provocation, for a petty trifling interest, to betray Me into the hands of My enemies, and to join thyself with them to persecute Me unto death. O this it is that afflicts My soul, and the more insupportably because in betraying and selling Me thou betrayest and sellest thy own soul (which is so dear to Me) to be an eternal prey of devils! Take care, my soul, thou never imitate the traitor. O dear Jesus, be Thou my keeper, or I also shall betray both myself and Thee! Alas, how often have I betrayed Thee already by wilful sin! Never suffer me to be so miserable any more.

2. Consider what an aggravation it was to the injury which the traitor offered to our Redeemer that he should set no greater value on Him, but sell Him at so low a rate as thirty pieces of silver—the price, may be, of the meanest slave; and that he should prefer

such a trifling consideration before his Lord and his God, who made both him and all things, and who set such a value upon his soul as to employ His whole life, and give His most precious blood to redeem it. My soul, dost thou not condemn and detest this monstrous treason? But hast thou never been guilty of the like or worse? Hast thou never sold for a mere trifling consideration the grace and friendship of thy Redeemer? Hast thou never preferred before Him a petty interest, a filthy pleasure, a punctilio of honour, or the gratifying of some unreasonable passion? And what was all this but selling both thy God and thy own soul for something of less value than the traitor's thirty pieces of silver? Alas! it is what thou hast been guilty of as often as thou hast committed mortal sin. Be confounded, repent, and amend.

3. Consider and see in this example of Judas that no state of life or calling, how holy soever, can secure us from danger, since an Apostle, called by Christ and trained in His school, so well instructed by His heavenly doctrine and great example, and empowered by Him to cast out devils and work wonderful miracles, is fallen nevertheless, and fallen so as to rise no more, even into the bottomless pit. Let him that stands be sensible upon what slippery ground he stands, and by whose grace he is supported and kept from falling, that so, by entirely distrusting himself and placing his whole confidence in God, he may work out his salvation with fear and trembling. But what was it that brought Judas to this enormous treason? It was love of money. This was his predominant passion. This he indulged at first in lesser injustices, by the opportunity of carrying the common purse, and thus, whilst he took no care to mortify his evil inclinations, by degrees they gained ground upon him, till they introduced Satan into full possession of his soul, and so prevailed upon him to betray and sell his Master, and then to hang himself in despair. Christians, beware of your passions; stifle them betimes, lest they grow headstrong by being neglected in the beginning; especially take care of that cheating vice of the love of money, the source of innumerable evils; and yet the poison works so insensibly that few or none are willing to think themselves infected with it. Alas! how many pretexts and pretences are made use of to cloak the evil; how many ways of palliating even frauds, injustices, usuries, and what not! And how ingenious are men, where their interest is concerned, to persuade themselves that their way is right, the end of which (as they will find to their cost when too late) leads to the second death.

Conclusion. Mistrust thyself, and thy own judgment in all cases where thy worldly honour, interest, or pleasure is concerned; because it is natural on these occasions to be biassed to that side of the question most agreeable to self-love. How hard it is to be an impartial judge in one's own case! But how happy are they who in simplicity of heart seek God,

and His holy will and law on all occasions, and do not desire to bend the law of God to their will, but their will to the law of God!

WEDNESDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On the Apprehension of our Lord.

1. Consider how our Saviour rising up from the ground where He had lain prostrate in prayer, all imbrued in His own blood, which He shed during His agony, goes for the third time to His disciples, whom He had desired to pray, and to watch with Him, but alas! He finds them still asleep. So little comfort did they afford their Lord in His distress! My soul, has not this been often thy case, to be unconcernedly sleeping, when it behoved thee to be watching and praying with thy Saviour? And what has been the consequence of this? Why, thou hast run away, and hast abandoned Him in the time of trial and temptation. But now by this time, the traitor, who was not asleep, has conducted to the place a multitude, headed by some of the priests and Pharisees, and armed with swords and clubs, to apprehend our Lord. See how thy Saviour goes forth to meet them, how ready He is to suffer, how willing to deliver Himself up for the love of thee; see in what manner He receives the traitor's kiss; "My friend," says He, "to what end art thou come hither?" Reflect what thou art about, and repent whilst thou hast time, and I will show thee mercy: "Judas, wilt thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?" O the meekness and charity of our Redeemer, who was ready to receive with open arms even Judas himself, if his hardened heart had not been proof against all the tenderness of His mercy! Sinners, see what encouragement we have to run to Him for mercy, since He was desirous to show it even to the traitor himself.

2. Consider how our Lord was pleased, on this occasion, to manifest His power, by casting to the ground all the armed multitude that were come to apprehend Him, with only these words, "I am He;" to show the world that no power of man could apprehend Him but by His own free will and consent, and in consequence of His boundless love. Blessed be that love for evermore! On the same occasion, when Malchus, a servant of the high priest, more busy than the rest in apprehending our Saviour, had his ear cut off by the sword of Peter, our Lord not only restrained this Apostle from using any further violence in His defence, but instantly showed both His power and His goodness in healing the wretch and restoring his ear, to teach us by His example to overcome evil with good. Then after having meekly expostulated with the priests and the Pharisees for coming out in this manner in the night, with an armed mob, to take Him, as if He

had been some highway robber, He gave them leave to use their pleasure with Him; but on condition that they should not meddle with any of His disciples. So solicitous was our dear Redeemer that none of His little ones should suffer anything upon this occasion, whilst He was going to offer up Himself in sacrifice for the love of them.

3. Consider that our Lord had no sooner delivered Himself up with these words, "This is your hour and the power of darkness," but they immediately rush in upon Him, and, as we may presume, from their hatred to Him, load Him with injuries and blasphemies. Then they bind Him fast, as if He were some notorious criminal, and drag Him violently along with them into the city. See, my soul, and contemplate the meekness, patience, and silence of the Lamb of God under all these outrages; accompany Him in spirit upon this occasion, for His Apostles have all left Him, and strive to study His interior, and to learn from the secret conversation He has all the while with His Father, from the prayer He is making for His enemies, and from the charity with which He offers up both His present and future sufferings, for thy sins, and for the sins of the whole world, what ought to be thy dispositions under the sufferings thou meetest with; what thy interior exercises of devotion, and what thy spirit of charity for them that afflict and persecute thee.

Conclusion. Follow thy Saviour in spirit, through all the different stages of His passion, with a sincere desire to study and learn the great lessons He teaches thee in His sufferings, and withal to make the best return of love thou art able, for the infinite love He has shown in suffering so much for the love of thee.

THURSDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On our Lord's being brought before Annas and Caiphas.

1. Consider how the rabble that had apprehended our Saviour having dragged him into the city with loud shouts and cries, brought Him first before Annas, one of the chief priests, to give him the pleasure of seeing the prisoner, and of insulting Him. Go in, my soul, with Him, and see the Son of God, the Judge of the living and the dead, standing, with His hands tied behind Him, before this insolent Jewish priest. Hear the impertinent questions he puts to Him, concerning His disciples and His doctrine, and admire the courage, meekness, and evenness of soul, which thy Saviour shows in His whole comportment on this occasion. See how He suffers even a vile servant, not only to rebuke Him in words for His modest and just answer, but also to strike Him on the face before all the company; an affront, which, if offered to the meanest of men, would be thought insup-

portable by the children of this world; but our great Master has taught us, both by word and example, that true courage consists in bearing, and not in revenging, injuries. And surely nothing can be more honourable to a Christian, than to walk in the footsteps of His King, and keep His laws.

2. Consider how our Saviour, bound as He was, is hurried away, with the like shouts and insolences, from Annas to the house of Caiphas the high priest, where the senate, or council, was assembled, determined to destroy Him, right or wrong; and therefore, notwithstanding it was now late at night, they immediately proceeded to His trial, and to examining the witnesses, of whom they had provided a good store, to depose against this innocent Lamb of God. Christians, what shall we most wonder at on this occasion,—the malice of the enemies of our Saviour, and the gross falsehoods they impose upon Him, or the force of truth and the wonderful innocence of our Lord, which would not suffer their testimonies to be of any weight against Him even in the judgment of so partial and so wicked a court? But what is most admirable of all, is that invincible meekness and patience, that perfect peace and tranquillity of soul, with which our Lord in silence heard Himself charged by these wicked impostors with so many false crimes, tending to rob Him both of His honour and His life! Surely one must be more than man to be silent on such occasions. Learn at least, my soul, from this silence of thy Saviour, not to be so sensitive with regard to thy honour; and if thou must speak in defence of thy innocence, see thou do it with that calmness and modesty that becomes a disciple of such a Master. A noisy and passionate defence will only make thy cause worse, and rob thee of thy peace, which is more valuable than anything the world can either give or take away.

3. Consider how the high priest, finding that his evidences did not agree in their story, stood up, and adjured our Saviour by the living God to tell them if He was indeed the Christ, the Son of God? Our Lord, in reverence for His Father's name, and to give testimony to that truth, the great foundation of the Christian religion, which He came to seal with His blood, immediately answered that He was, and that hereafter they should see Him sitting on the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Christians, give thanks to your Saviour for this solemn profession of what He was, though standing now in the midst of enemies, determined not to believe Him. They rejected and condemned the grand truth to their own condemnation; do you embrace and adore it to your salvation. Upon this open declaration of His divinity, the high priest rends his garments and cries out "Blasphemy!" and they all, with one voice, condemn Him to death. See, my soul, the Saint of saints traduced as a blasphemer, and the Author of Life judged worthy of death;

and this by the whole council of the priests and ancients of His people; and learn thou henceforward not to be so much concerned about the judgment of the world if it condemn thee wrongfully. What wonder, since it has condemned Christ Himself: He was innocence itself, whereas thy sins deserve more punishment than the world can condemn thee to.

Conclusion. In opposition to this unjust sentence given against the Lamb of God, join with all the heavenly Spirits, and with all the Elect of God, in that solemn canticle (Apoc. v. 12): "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction." But learn withal, from His great example, when thou art called to the trial, never to be ashamed of Him, nor His truth, though thou wert even to lay down thy life with Him, and for Him.

FRIDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On our Saviour's treatment in the house of Caiphas.

1. Consider how this sentence of condemnation was no sooner pronounced against our Lord, than the whole multitude began to fall upon Him, and to treat Him with all kinds of outrages and unheard-of barbarity. "They spit in His face, and buffet Him" (Matt. xxvi. 67). "They blindfold Him, and smite His face, and ask Him, saying: Prophesy who is it that struck thee" (Luke xxiii. 64). They pluck His hair and beard, whilst He, with His hands tied behind Him, makes no resistance, but, as He tells us (Isa. i. 5, 6), "gives up His body to them that strike Him, and His cheeks to them that pluck them, and turns not away His face from them that rebuke Him and spit upon Him." Not to speak of many other shameful abuses and injuries, so that here He is treated indeed "as a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people" (Ps. xxi.). Here, as the prophet foretold (Lam. iii. 30), "He is filled with reproaches." See what the Son of God has willingly submitted to, to save thee from sin and hell. Embrace that infinite charity of His, which has made Him stoop so low that He might take thee up from the dunghill, and place thee with Him on His throne; but detest thy sins, which have so often buffeted Him and spit in His face.

2. Consider what kind of night our Saviour passed in the hands of the rabble, after the council was broken up, and the priests and ancients had retired to rest. These brutal men, instigated by the example of their masters, and by those wicked spirits that possessed them, would not suffer our Lord to take any rest during that last night of His mortal life, but continued acting over and over again the same tragedy, by mocking, beating, and abusing the Lord of glory, whilst He has no hand at

liberty, nor friend, to ward off any of their blows, nor any one so much as to wipe their filthy spittle from off His face, all bruised and disfigured with their buffets. Ah! who shall be able to recount one half of what our Saviour suffered that night from these wretches? Besides all the reproaches, slanders, curses, and blasphemies with which they loaded Him, more intolerable than their blows? "Many other things," says St. Luke (xxiii. 65), "they said against Him, blaspheming;" while He all the while replied not a word: "when He was reviled, He did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not" (1 Pet. ii. 23), "but delivered Himself, not only to him that judged Him unjustly," but also to these vile wretches who so shamefully abused Him at their pleasure. Be astonished, O ye heavens, to see your Lord and Maker treated in this outrageous manner by the vilest of men! But alas! my soul, they were thy sins that were the chief actors in all this tragedy. Repent and amend.

3. Consider and set before thy eyes the image of thy Saviour in the hands of these miscreants; see His face all bruised, His whole countenance disfigured, so that not one of His features can now be distinguished, His forehead and cheeks defiled with their spittle, His beard plucked, His hair all rent and torn, and His whole person strangely metamorphosed. Then reflect who it is that suffers all this, and for whom; how freely He suffers, all by His own choice, and what lessons He gives thee in His sufferings; and thou wilt find abundant matter for meditation. But carry the eyes of thy soul still further, and look into His interior, and see the peace and tranquillity that reign there in the midst of all these sufferings, from His perfect conformity to the will of His Father: see how He prays for His enemies; see the joy with which He suffers, in consideration of the greater glory of His Father, and of our salvation which He is to purchase by these sufferings.

Conclusion. Admire and love the infinite charity of thy Redeemer, and resolve to imitate His patience, His meekness, His humility, and His conformity in all things to His Father's will.

SATURDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On Peter's denial.

1. Consider that amongst all the sufferings of that last night of our Saviour's life, nothing went so much to His heart as the behaviour of His Apostles; one of them betrayed Him, all of them abandoned Him, and Peter, the very chiefest of them all, who had been the most favoured by his Master, and who upon all occasions had professed the greatest zeal and love for Him, thrice denied that he knew Him. My soul, pity thy Saviour

thus forsaken by all His friends. Hear His complaint: "I looked on My right hand, and beheld, and there was no one that would have Me. Flight has perished from Me, and there is no one that hath regard to My soul" (Ps. cxli. 5). And again, "Friend and neighbour thou hast put away far from Me, and My acquaintance, because of My misery" (Ps. lxxxvii. 19). But what was it that induced Peter to deny his Lord and Master, who a little while before had drawn his sword to defend Him against an armed multitude, and had cut off the ear of the man that offered to lay hands on Him, and who had boasted that very night, that though all the rest should forsake Him, he would always keep by Him; that he was ready to go with Him to prison and to death; and that, though he were to die for it, he would never deny Him! What was it? Alas! the voice of a poor maid, putting the question to him, if he were not one of His disciples, threw him into such terror, that he not only denied, but even swore and cursed himself if ever he knew the man! Good Jesus! what is man! what is he not capable of, if Thou support him not by Thy grace! Oh, look well to me, Lord, and stand by me, or I shall also deny Thee.

2. Consider how Peter came to fall so quickly, after such strong resolutions, and so much zeal for his Master. Alas! he depended too much upon his resolutions, he did not sufficiently know himself, he built too much upon his own strength, and this secret presumption was the chief cause of his fall. Ah! my soul, beware of confidence in thyself; thou art never nearer falling than when thou seemest to have the strongest resolutions, if thy resolutions are not built upon the rock, which is Christ. Peter slept when he was admonished to watch and pray lest he should fall in the time of temptation; this neglect was another occasion of his sin, by depriving him of that grace which otherwise would have effectually preserved him. See if thy frequent falls be not owing to thy neglect of watching and praying. In fine, Peter was too rash in exposing himself to the danger, by going into the company of the enemies of our Saviour, and giving ear to their discourses, which so far influenced him as to make him ashamed of his Master. Beware, lest the like causes should have the like effects in thee. Beware of bad company, and of all such conversations as may make thee ashamed of Christ or His maxims, or in any way influence thee to the prejudice of thy soul.

3. Consider, in Peter's three denials, how easily one fall draws on another, and, generally speaking, a deeper; and learn from thence the necessity of a speedy repentance. Alas! Peter now fallen, as he passed over unregarded the crowing of the cock, so might have continued in his sin, and died in it too, had not his loving Redeemer, in the midst of all the outrages He was suffering, cast an eye of pity upon him, and touching his heart

at the same time with a strong and efficacious grace, sent him out from the wicked company he was in, to weep bitterly in private for his sins; a practice which he is said ever after to have retained, as often as he heard the cock crowing. Bless thy Lord, my soul, for the mercy He showed to this Apostle. Learn to imitate him, by a ready correspondence with divine grace, when it invites thee to go out from Babylon, the society of the wicked, and to weep bitterly for thy sins. But, content not thyself with short passing acts of repentance; if thou wouldst be secure, bewail thy sins, like St. Peter, as long as thou livest.

Conclusion. Be always upon thy guard, and if thou seemest to thyself to stand, take heed lest thou fall. Thou hast not half the strength that Peter had; be not then high-minded, but fear. Humility is thy best security.

PASSION SUNDAY.

On our Lord's being led away to Pilate.

1. Consider how the high priest, and his fellows in iniquity (notwithstanding their late sitting up at night), very early in the morning convene a more numerous assembly of the Sanhedrim, or great council, to carry on and to bring to execution their wicked designs against the Son of God. Alas! how often are the children of this world more industrious in rising early to wickedness, than the servants of God to advance His glory, and their own eternal salvation! Our Lord is again brought before them, and the question is put to Him again; "Art Thou Christ, the Son of God?" And upon His answering again in the affirmative, they all renew their former sentence, and declare Him worthy of death. But see the depth of the malice of these unhappy men against the Lord of Life, which will not suffer them to be content with putting Him to death privately, or with stoning Him, as they afterwards did St. Stephen, or with any other ordinary death, but they must needs have Him die upon a Cross, as the most disgraceful, and at the same time the most cruel, of all deaths; and therefore as they could not of their own authority inflict this kind of death, they determined to deliver Him up to Pilate the governor, in order to His being crucified by him. See what envy and malice are capable of, when once they have taken possession of the soul; and remember withal, that their envy and malice could not make the Son of God suffer anything more than His infinite charity had freely made choice of, to suffer for the love of thee. Blessed be that infinite charity for evermore, which freely chose so disgraceful and cruel a death to redeem us from sin and hell!

2. Consider the manner of their conducting our Lord to Pilate,

through the streets, lined with an immense multitude of people assembled at Jerusalem on account of the paschal solemnity. Hear how they publish all the way as they go, that now they had found Him to be a cheat and a hypocrite, had discovered all His impostures, and convicted Him, by His own confession, of blasphemy, and therefore had condemned him to die. See how the people, who a little while before reverenced Him as a prophet, are now all changed in His regard, and join with His enemies. See what a wretched figure He makes in their hands, after the treatment He had received in the night; how His enemies take occasion from thence to triumph and insult over Him; and how His friends grow cold, and are ashamed of Him. Do thou at least follow thy Lord with compassion and love in this His last journey that He takes for thy redemption; painful and humble indeed, and quite opposite to the way the world is fond of, and distasteful to flesh and blood; but oh, how wholesome to all such souls as willingly embrace and follow it in the company of Jesus Christ!

3. Consider how the high priest, and the rest of the council, being come to Pilate's house, made a scruple of going in, for fear of contracting a legal uncleanness that might disqualify them from partaking of the sacrifices offered on that day; it being the very day of the feast of the Passover, celebrated in memory of their redemption from the bondage of Egypt. And yet, unhappy men, whilst they scruple going into the house of a Gentile for fear of uncleanness that could only reach the body, they are not afraid of polluting their souls with the most heinous of all crimes, and profaning thereby the greatest of all their solemnities. But what are men not capable of, when they suffer themselves to be hurried away by their passions! But see the wonderful providence of God! whilst they on their part are so bent upon their wickedness, that no other day will serve their turn but the very day of their sacrificing the paschal lamb; without thinking of or designing it, they concur, as instruments, in bringing about the merciful designs of God for the redemption of the whole world, by the sacrifice of the true paschal Lamb, on that same day on which their yearly Passover was an illustrious figure of our Redemption.

Conclusion. Beware of thy passions, which, if indulged, are capable of blinding thee to such a degree as to pervert the greatest good into evil. And on the other side, embrace and love the wonderful ways of divine Providence, which so often draws the greatest good out of the greatest evils.

MONDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Our Lord is sent from Pilate to Herod.

1. Consider how Pilate going out to inquire what accusation they brought against our Saviour, these children of iniquity made no scruple of laying many notoriously untrue accusations to His charge; such as raising seditions, stirring up the people to rebellion, forbidding tribute to be paid to the emperor, and treasonably giving Himself out as king of the Jews. Under all these wicked slanders, that tended to nothing less than procuring His condemnation to the worst of deaths, our Lord showed the same peace and tranquillity of soul, and still kept silence, to the great astonishment of the governor. Admirable lessons for Christians! to learn to possess their souls at least in patience, if they cannot be wholly silent under calumny and detraction, and to learn that calmness and meekness will be a better proof and defence of their innocence than passion and rage, or returning injury for injury. We see, too, that Pilate himself, though otherwise a wicked man, was so far from interpreting our Saviour's silence joined with that tranquillity of soul, as an acknowledgment of His guilt, that he concluded it to be an argument of His innocence, and clearly perceived in the Jews' way of acting, that they were carried on by envy and passion, and not by zeal for justice; and therefore, after inquiring of our Lord concerning His being a King, and understanding from Him that His kingdom was not of this world, and therefore in no way prejudicial to Cæsar's authority, he declared himself fully satisfied, and sought to discharge Him.

2. Consider how the Jews still urging to have our Lord condemned, Pilate, to get rid of their importunity, sends Him away to Herod, king of Galilee, as one of his subjects, and refers His cause to Him. Follow thy Saviour, my soul, in this new stage, and admire the serenity of His countenance, and the peace of His soul, whilst He is hurried through the streets in the midst of an insulting mob, and loaded with reproaches and injuries. See how He is brought in bonds before that prince, attended by the whole council, who there renew all their false accusations against Him, whilst Herod, who is overjoyed to see Him, in hopes of being eye-witness of some miracle, puts a thousand idle questions to Him. But our Lord is silent, and neither takes any notice of the falsities laid to His charge by His accusers, nor seeks to gratify the vain curiosity of Herod, nor to do anything that might incline him to set Him at liberty. No, thy Saviour has too great love for thee, to work a miracle to deliver Himself from that death, which He so gladly embraces, as the only means to give thee life. Blessed by all creatures be His goodness for ever!

3. Consider how Herod, provoked with our Lord's not consenting to gratify his desire of seeing a miracle, revenges himself on Him by treating Him with mockery and scorn, exposes Him to the scoffs of his soldiers, orders Him to be clothed in contempt with a white garment, as with a fool's coat, and in this garb sends Him back to Pilate, accompanied as before by the priests and scribes, and an insulting rabble, who take fresh occasion, from His disgraceful habit, to abuse Him. See, with astonishment, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father treated by the world as a fool; see the great King of heaven and earth abused as a mock king, and an idle pretender to royalty. And learn from thence not to be solicitous about the judgment of the world, nor to repine if it charge thee with folly; for why shouldst thou expect better treatment than thy Lord? Remember that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; and that what the world censures as foolishness, is indeed true wisdom. Remember that "whosoever will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God" (James iv. 4).

Conclusion. Adhere to thy Lord in the midst of all His reproaches and sufferings, embrace His wisdom, hidden under the fool's coat, which the world had flung over it, and ever acknowledge Him for the true King of thy heart. Beg that His kingdom may be established there, and the reign of sin be totally abolished.

TUESDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Barabbas is preferred before our Lord. He is scourged at the pillar.

1. Consider how Pilate, seeing our Lord brought back to his tribunal, and the high priest and council still bent upon destroying the innocent, thinks of another way to release Him without giving them offence. It was the privilege of the people to have their choice of a prisoner, to be set at liberty, on the paschal solemnity, in memory of their being delivered on that day from the bondage of Egypt. He proposes therefore, for their choice, our Saviour on the one hand, and Barabbas, a notorious robber and murderer, on the other; making sure that they would rather choose to have our Saviour released, in whom neither he nor they could find any crime, than Barabbas, the worst of criminals. O eternal Son of God, how low dost Thou stoop for my sins, when Thou sufferest Thyself to be put in competition with the vilest and most wicked of men, and to have it put to the vote of the rabble which of the two is the most deserving of death! O the unparalleled humility of my Saviour! O the unparalleled injury here offered to Him by Pilate, whilst he pretends to favour Him! But O! the unparalleled blindness of this unhappy people, who make choice of Barabbas before their Messias, and

demand with loud cries that the former may be released, and the latter crucified! See, my soul, in this wonderful humiliation of thy Lord, how deep, how desperate was the wound of thy pride, which could not be healed but by such and so great humility. Learn henceforward from Him, at least, to be humble of heart, and never think much, if others, how mean soever, be preferred before thee, since Barabbas was preferred before Christ. Alas! how often hast thou thyself preferred something worse than Barabbas, even that ugly monster sin, before the Lord of glory.

2. Consider how the Jews still insisting, in a tumultuous manner, that our Lord should be crucified, Pilate, in hopes of appeasing them by a kind of compromise, and so making them relent, orders Him to be cruelly scourged; a torment most grievous to our dear Redeemer, who on divers occasions, speaking of His Passion, takes special notice of it, and at the same time most disgraceful, and ignominious. Look on now, my soul, in spirit, and see in what manner thy Saviour is treated for thee. See how the executioners lay violent hands on the Lamb of God; see how they tear off His clothes, and expose Him naked, before a great multitude, to cold and shame; see how they bind Him fast to a stone pillar; see how they discharge upon His sacred back, shoulders, and sides, innumerable stripes; see how His body is all torn and mangled by their barbarity, see how the blood comes spouting out on all sides. See in His gaping wounds the handiwork of thy sins. Take pity on His mangled flesh, and let the sight of so much blood, shed for thee, mollify thy heart, and determine thee from this hour never more to scourge Him by sin. Run now, and cast thyself at His feet, and bathe thyself in His precious blood; mingle, at least, some few tears with His sacred gore, and repent from thy heart for the share thou hast had in this scourging of thy Lord.

3. Consider in this scourging of our Saviour who it is that is thus barbarously and ignominiously treated. And why does He suffer all this? O my soul, He is the God who made thee; He is the Lord and Maker of heaven and earth, who suffers all this, by His own free choice, for love of thee; it is to deliver thee by His sufferings from the grievous and eternal torments thy sins have deserved, and to purchase for thee everlasting joys which thou never couldst deserve. O infinite love of my God! Never suffer me, dearest Saviour, to forget what Thou hast endured for the love of me! But see in what manner our Lord suffers all this barbarous usage; without resistance, without complaint, in silence, with perfect resignation and conformity to the will of His Father, in perfect charity, praying for His enemies, whilst they stand by insulting over him, and rejoicing at His torments. My soul, let us study well, and learn these lessons of our suffering Redeemer.

Conclusion. Make the best acknowledgment thou art able of

the love thy Saviour has shown thee in His sufferings, by a return of thanksgiving and love, and by a constant detestation of sin, as His and thy mortal enemy, and the occasion of all His sufferings.

WEDNESDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Our Lord is crowned with Thorns.

1. Consider how the barbarous ruffians, being wearied at last with scourging our Lord, untie Him from the pillar, covered with wounds, and with His strength exhausted by the loss of so much blood; and now, whilst they rest themselves, they leave Him to seek out and pick up His clothes, which they had scattered about, and to put them on as well as He can; for He is so stiff and weak, so mangled by their barbarity, as to be but little able to help Himself, and He has no friend at hand to help Him. But how ill do these rough woollen clothes suit His green wounds! how does the rubbing of them, at every step or motion, increase the smart! But now behold another scene of barbarity, not to be paralleled in all history, acted by these brutal soldiers, in crowning our Lord for a king, by a most cruel mockery, and sporting themselves in His sufferings. To perform this tragical ceremony with more solemnity, they drag our Saviour into the court of the governor's hall, and assemble the whole regiment about Him; then they strip Him again of His garments, which now were beginning to stick to His wounds, which they rend and widen by this violence. See, my soul, how the Lord now stands, as a lamb in the midst of innumerable wolves; see how, from head to foot, He is imbrued in blood; see at how dear a rate He has purchased thy redemption.

2. Consider what a throne, what royal robes, what a crown, what a sceptre, these wretches have provided for the Lord of glory. See how they make Him sit down on some mean stool for a throne, and how they throw about Him for royal robes an old ragged purple garment, to the great torment of His wounded back, shoulders, and arms. After this they press down on His sacred head a twisted wreath of long, hard, and sharp thorns for a royal crown; then they put into His hands, for a sceptre, a reed; and having thus arrayed Him, they come and kneel before Him, in mockery, to pay Him their homage, saluting Him scornfully with "Hail, king of the Jews;" and then, by turns, they buffet Him, spit in His face, and strike Him over the head with the sceptre they had given Him, and by that means drive the thorns deeper in, whilst the blood trickles down apace from the numberless wounds which He receives from their points! Who shall be able to number the multitude and variety of sufferings which our Lord endured upon this occasion! In which

it is hard to say whether the torment, or the ignominy and disgrace, was more intolerable. Yet our dear Lord bore all in patience and silence for the love of us.

3. Consider and take a view at leisure of our Saviour sitting on this stool of ignominy, in the midst of the whole regiment of insolent and barbarous pagan soldiers. Reflect on what He suffers in His sacred head and temples from those hard, sharp thorns, which pierce His flesh with so many wounds. Who can conceive the greatness of this torture! See how the blood trickles down His face and neck; see the many bruises He receives from the violent blows they give Him with their hands; see His divine countenance covered with the filth they cast upon Him; see through the ragged purple the wounds of His mangled body, bleeding plentifully for thy sins; in fine, see how this lawless, insulting multitude strive which shall outdo the other in their scoffs, affronts, and injuries; whilst our Lord, on His part, preserves the same serenity in His countenance, the same tranquillity in His soul, and the same charity in His heart. But, my soul, whilst thou art contemplating Him under all these barbarous mockeries and torments, cast thy eye upwards, and see Him sitting on His throne of glory, adored by all the legions of angels; and do thou join with them in paying Him the best homage thou art able; and ever remember, that the more He has debased Himself for thee, the more dear He ought to be to thee.

Conclusion. Acknowledge thy Saviour, in the midst of all these ignominies, for the true King of thy heart, and beg Him to come and establish His throne there. Learn from Him to bear the thorns appointed for thee in this thy mortal pilgrimage. Pretend not to a crown of roses, to a life of worldly pleasure, whilst thy Lord makes choice of a crown of thorns for love of thee.

THURSDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Our Lord is shown to the people with Ecce homo, *Behold the Man!*

1. Consider how Pilate, hoping that the malice of the Jews would be so far abated as to insist no longer on our Saviour's death, after seeing in what a barbarous manner He had been treated in compliance with their passions, leads Him out, just as He was, with the crown of thorns upon His head, and the ragged purple on His shoulders, and from an eminence shows Him to the people with these words: Ecce homo! Behold the Man! as much as to say, Take a view of Him now from head to foot, see how He is all covered with wounds, how His whole body is torn and mangled with scourges, His head and temples pierced with thorns, His face black and blue, and His person

quite disfigured! See how cruelly He has been handled, in complaisance to you, though neither I, nor Herod, could find any crime in Him! Let then this outrageous treatment He has received from the soldiers, let all the blood He has shed, satisfy you; take pity on Him now, at least, and cease to seek His death. But how vain is it to expect that men's passions should be abated by giving way to them! Pilate imagined the sight of so much innocent blood already shed would extinguish the thirst of the Jews, whereas it did but increase it, and make them more eager for our Lord's death. See, my soul, thou never suffer thyself to be imposed upon in like manner, thinking to rid thyself more easily of thy troublesome temptations or passions, by making a kind of compromise, and giving them at present what they crave. The more thou givest them, the more they will demand, and the more they will tyrannise over thee. It is not by yielding, but by fighting resolutely against them, thou art to conquer.

2. Consider thy Saviour presenting Himself to thee upon this occasion, with all His wounds, and all the disgraceful attire of His ragged robes and thorny crown, with Ecce homo! Behold the Man! But see thou look upon Him with other eyes than those unhappy miscreants did, who only took occasion from the sight of His sufferings to cry out more eagerly, "Away with Him, away with Him; crucify Him, crucify Him!" Behold the Man, even the Eternal Word of the Father, made man for love of thee. Behold His head crowned with sharp thorns, piercing it on all sides with excessive pain; behold His face bruised beyond measure, and covered with blood and spittle; behold, through His ragged purple, the innumerable stripes and wounds of His mangled body! Behold and see to what a condition thy sins, and His own infinite charity, have reduced the Lord of glory! Then consider what return thou wilt make Him for His sufferings, and for all His love. He desires no other return but that of thy heart; but it must be an humble and contrite heart; it must be a loving and obedient heart.

3. Consider the Eternal Father presenting His Son to us in His Passion, all covered with wounds, and imbrued in His blood, with another Ecce homo! Behold the Man! Setting before our eyes all that He has suffered out of pure love for us, representing to us His infinite goodness and mercy, and the heinousness of our sins and ingratitude to Him; encouraging us to hope in Him, inviting us to love Him, and to detest our sins for the love of Him, and offering us all good things through Him; only desiring that we would cease to persecute Him by sin. Give attention, my soul, to this loving voice of thy God, and to all the sufferings of His Son; but, in return, do thou also present Him to His Father, with the like Ecce homo! Behold the Man! laying before Him all that His Son has endured for thee, in the

whole course of His Passion ; and putting in thy claim to that mercy, grace, and salvation which He has purchased for thee by all these sufferings. In particular, insist upon this one favour to be granted thee, through His Passion and death, that thou mayest never more be disloyal to Him.

Conclusion. Represent all thy miseries and sins to thy Redeemer, and through Him, to His Father, with another Ecce homo ! Behold the Man ! and begging redress from Him, and through His precious blood, of all thy miseries, and the remission of all thy sins.

FRIDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

On the part the Blessed Virgin bore in her Son's Sufferings.

1. Consider the foresight the Blessed Virgin had of the Passion of her Son, from the time that she heard those prophetic words addressed to her by holy Simeon (Luke ii. 34, 35), that He should "be set for a sign which should be contradicted, and that a sword should pierce her own soul." Yes, blessed Lady, a sword indeed, far more sharp and penetrating than any earthly steel, which can pierce only the body and cannot reach the soul, whereas this sword, of more than mortal anguish, which thou didst suffer by occasion of the Passion of thy Son, inflicts a most bitter, deep, and deadly wound, in the very midst of thy soul. A wound which began to be inflicted at the time of this prophecy, by the sense which the heavenly Father then gave thee of what thy Son was to suffer ; a wound which was a most bitter alloy of all those consolations thou didst receive from the sight, conversation, and embraces of thy Jesus ; a wound which thou didst carry about with thee in thy soul, all the time of His mortal life, still widening, as the time of his Passion grew nearer, and not healed but by His glorious Resurrection. Christians, see how the greatest favourite of Heaven, by divine appointment, meets with the greatest crosses in this mortal pilgrimage. But no wonder, Christ Himself was first to suffer, and so to enter into His glory ; His blessed Mother and all the saints were to walk in the same road in order to follow Him, and to partake in His glorious kingdom. Think not much if your Lord chooses for you what He chose for Himself, for His blessed Mother, and for all His elect.

2. Consider how much the affliction and anguish of this Virgin Mother was increased, when the news was brought her of her Son's being betrayed by Judas, apprehended, bound, and dragged away in that inhuman manner before the council, and what treatment He had met with there, after being condemned by them. But as the sight usually affects us more than the hearing, so doubtless this blessed Mother was oppressed with a far more

killing grief, when, on the next morning, she was an eyewitness of all the outrages and torments He suffered in the different stages of His Passion. For as no love that any person upon earth has ever experienced could any way approach to the love she bore our Lord, not only as her Son, but much more as her God; so, in proportion to her love, her anguish and sorrow to see Him treated in that cruel and barbarous manner, was the greatest that any pure creature could ever sustain, and nothing less than a miracle could support her, or keep her alive under so dreadful a torture. Ah, Christians! the whips, thorns, and nails that pierced His flesh, pierced her heart with inexpressible pain and sorrow, which none surely could ever exceed, but those of her Son, the man of sorrows. Take pity, my soul, on the sorrows of them both, and see thou never more grieve them by sin.

3. Consider more in particular, how the Blessed Virgin was affected when she first saw her Son in the morning, in the hands of His enemies, all disfigured by their blows, with His hands tied behind Him, His face covered with spittle, and His hair all rent and torn. O my soul, even so hard a heart as thine could scarcely bear such a sight as this, much less her tender heart! But what was this in comparison with what she endured when He was so cruelly scourged at the pillar; when He was crowned with piercing thorns, and buffeted by a whole band of soldiers! What pangs did she suffer when she saw Him presented to the people with the Ecce homo! Behold the Man! How did she then feel in her soul all these wounds she discovered in His head and body? Nor did she suffer less, but rather much more, when she followed Him in His last journey to Mount Calvary, bearing His Cross on His mangled shoulders, and marking the way with His sacred blood. But what was all this compared with what she endured when she heard the strokes of the hammer driving the nails into His hands and feet; when she saw Him hoisted up into the air, and there hanging, extended as upon a rack, and supported on His wounds; when standing near the Cross she saw the extremity of the torture He there endured; contemplated the multitude and variety of His sufferings; heard His last dying words, and saw Him give up the ghost? How truly might she then cry out with the Prophet, "O all you that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be sorrow like to my sorrow!" (Lam. i. 12.) Learn, my soul, from this Queen of sorrows, with what eye thou oughtest to look upon the sufferings of the Son of God, and how to bewail those sins which have given cause to them.

Conclusion. Imitate the virtues of which this blessed Lady has given us an illustrious example, in the martyrdom she endured under the Cross of her Son; especially learn her courage and fortitude under such bitter suffering, her patience and perfect

conformity to the will of God, her lively faith and hope. These must support thee also under all thy crosses.

SATURDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Our Lord is condemned to the Cross.

1. Consider how the Jews, perceiving that Pilate was bent upon releasing our Saviour, told him that if he released that man, he could be no friend of Cæsar, for whosoever made himself a king, opposed Cæsar (John xix. 12). See what evils human respect is capable of producing, and how sad a thing it is, either to fear or to love anything more than God. Pilate's resolution in a moment falls to the ground, upon the apprehension of being accused to Cæsar and of losing his favour; rather than risk this, he is determined to make a sacrifice of his conscience, in condemning the innocent. Alas! have we never had a share in the like guilt? Has not human fear, or the apprehension of what the world would say, too often influenced us to condemn, at least in deed, our Lord and His doctrine by mortal sin? Has not a much less consideration than the fear of losing the favour of an Emperor, prevailed on these occasions over our best resolutions? What a hold do we not give the enemy by these human fears, and by our irregular affection to this cheating world! But see the vain excuses by which men seek to palliate the guilt of their sins, and to save their conscience. Pilate washes his hands and cries out, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man; look you to it" (Matt. xxvi. 24), as if this ceremony and verbal declaration could clear him, in the sight of the just Judge, from the guilt of concurring in the death of the innocent. But see also into what extremities unhappy souls cast themselves when they are once obstinately bent upon sin, in that dreadful sentence which the Jews pronounced against themselves on that occasion: "His blood be upon us, and upon our children!"

2. Consider how Pilate proceeds to give judgment of death against the Lord of life, and sentences our Saviour to the cross in compliance with the cry of the whole people, still calling out in a tumultuous manner, Crucify Him, crucify Him! But, my soul, reflect that it was the voice of thy crying sins that far more effectually called for the death of the Son of God than the cry of the Jews; for that tumult could have had no power to bring on His crucifixion, had He not been determined to suffer this kind of death for the expiation of thy sins. But hear with what loud huzzas, with what triumph and joy, this sentence is received by the enemies of our Lord, and with what sighs and tears, with what grief and anguish by His friends, and especially by His blessed Mother. But how does the Lamb of God behave on this occasion? In what manner does He receive this sentence of

death? He receives it in silence and peace, with perfect submission and conformity to the will of His Father; He receives it even with joy, out of His infinite charity for us, as the only means of our redemption and salvation. See whether thou submittest to thy crosses with the like dispositions. Dost thou embrace them as the means of divine appointment to bring thee to heaven?

3. Consider that this sentence of death pronounced against our Lord, was an act of the highest injustice on the part of Pilate; but highly just on the part of God, in consideration of our sins, which His Son had taken upon Himself. And therefore our Saviour, who is infinitely holy, could not indeed but abhor the crime of Pilate, though He suffered it; but as the judgment and sentence of His Father, He embraced it as being most holy and just; He bowed down and adored it with all the powers of His soul—to teach us, and all who desire to be His disciples, to distinguish, on the like occasions, when we have anything to suffer from others, between man's injustice and God's justice, and to receive our sufferings from what hand soever they come and how unjustly soever, as highly just on the part of God, punishing us, by those instruments, for our sins.

Conclusion. Thank the infinite charity of the Father, who, for the love of us, spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, and sentenced Him to die; and the infinite charity of the Son, for embracing so cordially this sentence of death for the love of us. Make an oblation, in return, of thy whole self, both to the Father and to the Son, and desire henceforward to live only for Him who delivered Himself up to death for the love of thee.

N.B.—Palm Sunday *being kept in memory of our Saviour's solemn entry into Jerusalem, five days before His Passion: to correspond to the devotion of the day, we shall here insert a meditation upon that subject, and interrupt the course of the considerations on the Passion.*

PALM SUNDAY.

On our Lord's triumphant entrance into Jerusalem.

1. Consider how the time now drawing near when our Saviour was to offer Himself in sacrifice for the sins of the world, He was pleased to come to the place where He was to complete this sacrifice: and as, in order to fulfil the ancient figures, He chose that very night for the institution of the Passover of the new Law, which was set aside for the immolation of the paschal lamb in the old law, and that very day for the redemption of the world, in which God's people had formerly been

redeemed from their Egyptian bondage; so also He was pleased to make His entry into Jerusalem in order to His sacrifice, on the very day on which, by appointment of the law (Exod. xii. 3), the lamb was to be brought to town, which was to be sacrificed for the passover. Contemplate here, O Christian soul, the greatness of that love and charity for thee, which pushes thy Saviour forward on this occasion; see the joyful readiness with which He goes to offer Himself to death for love of thee; admire and adore the dispositions of His Providence, who was pleased that the glory of His birth should be hidden in the obscurity of a poor stable in little Bethlehem, whilst He chose for the ignominy of His Passion the great city of Jerusalem, and the Paschal time, when the whole nation of the Jews was assembled there.

2. Consider the manner in which our Lord was pleased to be received on this day, by a solemn procession of the people, strewing their garments in the way, and bearing palm-branches in their hands, to testify His victory over the prince of darkness, and accompanying Him with loud acclamations and hosannas of joy, to honour Him as their King and Messias. See if thou art in proper dispositions to join in this triumphal procession, and with a palm-branch in thy hand, to celebrate the victory of thy Lord over death, sin, and hell; alas! with what face canst thou attend Him on this occasion, if thou art still a slave to these His enemies? Reflect also on the inconstancy of the world, and how little account thou shouldst make of the esteem and applause of men, when thou seest how this same people, who on this day received our Lord with these loud hosannas, and acknowledged Him for their King and their Saviour, five days after cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! crucify Him, crucify Him!"

3. Consider the dispositions of the soul of our Redeemer in the midst of these honours and acclamations, and how little He is affected by them. See how upon this occasion He weeps over the unhappy Jerusalem, and over every impenitent soul, that like Jerusalem takes no notice, "in this her day, of the things that are for her peace; but lets slip the time of her visitation" (Luke xix. 42, 44). Learn from this very triumph His love of poverty, and His meekness, in the manner of His riding into Jerusalem, upon an ass's colt. Give ear to the prophet (Zach. ix. 9), "Rejoice, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King will come to thee; the Just, and the Saviour: He is poor, and riding upon an ass," &c. See thou imitate His humility, whilst thou rejoice in His victory.

Conclusion. Honour the triumph of thy Saviour in the best manner thou art able, in the procession of this day. Acknowledge Him for thy King and Lord of thy heart, and invite Him in thither. But see that sin and hell have no place there.

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

Our Saviour carries His Cross.

1. Consider how upon Pilate's pronouncing sentence against our Lord, they immediately proceed to its execution; and first they strip off His purple robe, and clothe Him again with His own garments. Then they bring the Cross, which He was to carry on His shoulders to Mount Calvary, as Isaac formerly did the wood upon which he was to be offered in sacrifice. But who can express or conceive that affection of soul with which our Saviour embraces His Cross, which He is now going to consecrate with His precious blood? this Cross designed to be the happy instrument of our redemption, the altar of His sacrifice, the throne of His mercy, the trophy of His victory, the eternal monument of His love, the refuge of sinners, the comfort of the afflicted, the glory of His elect, the school of all virtues, and the source of all our good. What are thy sentiments with regard to the Cross of Christ? Thou must embrace the Cross with Him, if thou desirest to reign with Him. Give ear to a great servant of God, expressing his affection to the Cross, in this pathetic manner: "I bow down to thee, O precious Cross, consecrated by the embraces, and by the blood of Jesus, my Lord and my King. I look upon thee as the standard of His armies, as the watch-tower showing forth its light, to guide His elect in this stormy ocean, as the defence of His servants, and as the mark and badge of His children. I adore thee, O hidden wisdom! O light unknown to the world! the honour of them that follow thee, the safety of them that carry thee, the crown of them that embrace thee, the reward of them that love thee, and the salvation of them that cast themselves into thy arms. To die on thee is to live, and to live on thee is to reign. He that loves thee is content; he that desires thee is easy; he that possesses thee is rich. I bow down to thee, O tree of life, the fruit of which is the solid food of the children of God. O balance ever even, in which alone we discover the just value and the true price of all things; in thee is found health and life, the victory over hell, the sweets of Paradise, strength of heart, joy of spirit, perfection of virtue, and assurance of eternal goods. I embrace thee, O holy Cross, consecrated by the sweat and by the blood of my Saviour. Thou shalt be henceforward my refuge, my light, my knowledge, and all my wisdom. Forsake me not, keep not at a distance from me, though this flesh of mine dread thee, and seek to fly from thee. Oh, fasten me to the Cross with Thee, my sweet Jesus, and enlighten me with Thy admirable light; that my spirit may penetrate into the depth of the mysteries, and of the wisdom of the Cross."—*Sufferings of Jesus*, chap. xlii My soul, are these thy sentiments?

2. Consider, and take a view of the Lamb of God setting out upon this His last, most wearisome, and most painful journey of His mortal life; loaded with the enormous weight of the Cross, and with the far more intolerable weight of the sins of the world. See the length and size of the Cross, proportioned to bear the weight of a human body suspended in the air; and reflect how little strength remains in His body after so many sufferings and fatigues, and the loss of so much blood. Ah! how rough, how hard, how insupportable, then, is this load to His shoulders and back, all mangled, rent, and torn with the whips and scourges! How does it press upon His green wounds, and squeeze out His sacred blood all the way! Mark this last procession. A crier leads the way, publishing His pretended crimes and blasphemies; then follow the soldiers and executioners, with ropes, hammers, nails, &c. And after them goeth, or rather creepeth along, our High Priest and Victim, all bruised and bleeding, and staggering under the burden of His Cross, attended by a thief on each hand, and surrounded by a multitude of His enemies insulting over Him, and loading Him with scoffs, reproaches, and curses, whilst the cruel executioners at every turn are hastening Him forward with their kicks and blows. Follow thy Lord, my soul, in this last and most painful procession; offer Him what service thou canst to ease Him of some part of His burden; weep over Him, at least, with the good women who followed Him; but take notice of His admonishing them rather to weep for themselves and for their children; and see how, in the midst of His sufferings, He is much more concerned for our miseries and sins, than for anything He Himself endures. Blessed be His infinite charity for us poor sinners!

3. Consider how our Lord having for some time, with unspeakable labour and torment, carried His Cross through the streets, at last falls down under the enormous weight of it, unable to carry it any longer. But with what a shock does He fall! with what additional torture to His wounded body, now exhausted with pain and labour, and loss of blood! See how the pitiless executioners employ their kicks and blows to oblige Him to rise again with His burden, but all in vain; His strength is quite gone, He is not able to carry it any farther. Therefore, lest His execution should be delayed, they lay hold on Simon of Cyrene, whom they met coming out of the country, and they oblige him to take up the Cross, and ease our Lord of part of the burden, by carrying it after Him. But who shall ease Him of any part of that other load, infinitely more insupportable, which His heavenly Father has laid upon Him, of the sins of the whole world! My soul, do thou give Him what little ease thou canst, by lamenting the share thy sins have in this tragedy, and by ceasing henceforward to afflict Him by them.

Conclusion. Offer thy service to thy Redeemer on this

occasion, to take up His Cross for Him, and help Him, like Simon of Cyrene, in carrying it; or rather offer thyself to Him, to take up thy own cross with perfect resignation and patience, and follow Him. This He particularly calls for and expects at thy hands.

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

Our Saviour is nailed to the Cross.

1. Consider how our Lord arrived at length at Mount Calvary, quite wearied and spent; the untired malice of His enemies pursuing Him still, finds out a new torture for Him, by mingling gall with the wine that, according to custom, was presented as a strengthening draught to criminals who were to be executed. Our Lord, that He might suffer the more for us, was pleased by tasting it to embitter His palate, parched up before with a violent thirst; but He would not admit of the comfort that the drinking of it might have afforded Him: "when He had tasted, He would not drink" (Matt. xxvii. 34). And now they strip Him violently of His clothes, which by this time began to cleave to His mangled body, being pressed into the wounds by the weight of the Cross; so that they are now opened afresh, and this Lamb of God is in a manner flayed alive, in order to be laid on the altar of the Cross. See, my soul, how He stands all covered with His blood, His eyes lifted up to heaven, with infinite charity praying for poor sinners, even for His very executioners. Hasten now and cast thyself at His feet, and bathe thyself in that precious blood which He so plentifully sheds for thee; but see thou mingle with it thy penitential tears, in consideration of the share thou hast had in bringing these sufferings upon Him by thy sins.

2. Consider how, all things being now ready, they order Him to lie down upon the Cross. He obeys without resistance or demur, and lays Himself upon this hard bed on which He is to die; the bed of sorrow on which He is to bring us forth to God. Here He lies with His eyes fixed on heaven, as high priest of all mankind, offering Himself a victim of propitiation for our sins to His eternal Father, and freely giving up His hands and feet to the executioners, to be pierced with the nails. See how one of these ruffians comes with a large sharp nail, and fixing the point of it upon the sacred palm of one of our Saviour's hands, violently drives it with his hammer into the tender flesh, forcing its way, with inconceivable torment, through the nerves, sinews, muscles, and bones, of which the hand is composed, deep into the hard wood of the Cross. The extremity of pain which was caused by the violent piercing of so many nerves and bones as meet in the hand, made all the nerves and sinews shrink up, and

draw the body towards that hand that was nailed, so that great violence was used by the executioners in dragging the other arm and hand to the opposite side, to the place prepared for it, where they served it in like manner. And then, with equal barbarity, they drew down His sacred feet, and nailed them also to the Cross, verifying that of the prophet (Ps. xxi.), "they have dug My hands and feet; they have numbered all My bones:" inasmuch as, by the violence of their pulling, the bones of our Lord were so drawn from their places, and disjointed, that they might be numbered. Ah! sweet Saviour, who can conceive the least part of what Thou hast here endured for the love of me?

3. Consider what shocks, what tortures, our Lord, being now nailed fast to the Cross, must have suffered in His whole body, when they dragged the Cross along the ground to the hole prepared for it; how much, when they began with ropes to raise Him up in the air; how much, when they let the foot of the Cross fall with a jolt into the hole; how much, when they fastened it in the ground with large stakes, which they drove in with mallets. Oh! who can think, without horror, on the racking pains that every motion or shock of this nature must have caused to a body all disjointed, and supported only by the bones and sinews of the hands and feet pierced through with gross nails. But though this torture which our Lord here endured, was so great and insupportable, that one would think it might have moved the hardest heart to compassion, to see even a brute beast undergo so much; yet such was the insatiable malice of the enemies of our Saviour, that instead of showing Him any pity, or relenting at the sight of His torments, they shout and triumph, when they let Him appear above the heads of the people; and drawing nigher, they stand shaking their heads at Him, rejoicing at His sufferings, scoffing, and insulting Him. Christians, whilst you detest this Jewish malice, see you have no share in it by your obstinacy in sin; "crucifying again to yourselves the Son of God, and making a mockery of Him" (Heb. vi. 6).

Conclusion. Detest the handiwork of your sins, which have nailed your Saviour to the Cross; by loving Him who out of pure love for you has endured so much. Oh! that we could say with the martyr Ignatius, and with like affection, "My love is fastened to the Cross."

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

On the sufferings of our Saviour upon the Cross.

1. Consider what our Lord suffers upon the Cross, until He consummates His sacrifice. Draw near, and sit down under the shadow of thy true lover, with a longing desire to be His scholar

in this school of love. Contemplate at leisure the multitude and variety of His sufferings. And first, as to His sacred body; see how "from the sole of the foot to the top of the head, there is no soundness therein;" see how it is all covered with wounds and blood. Oh, how rough is this hard bed of the Cross to a body all torn and mangled! How uneasy this pillow of a thorny crown to His wounded head! See all the cruel bruises with which His divine face is disfigured, and reflect on the smart and pain of them. See how the whole body is violently stretched, as upon a rack, with inexpressible torture in all the joints and limbs. But, above all, remark those four streams of blood, those fountains of Paradise that flow from the four most painful wounds of His hands and feet; and consider how the whole weight of His body, hanging by these gross nails, while it naturally sinks downwards, is continually rending and tearing His wounds, and increasing His pains.

2. Consider what our Saviour suffers in His soul, and thou shalt find it to be much more insupportable than all He endures in His body. Witness the inexpressible horror He has for the sins of the world, all now lying upon Him, and oppressing His soul with their infinite weight, His deep sense of those blasphemies He hears uttered against the Deity, and the contempt they show for His person and His divine truths. Witness the anguish of His soul at seeing the hardness, blindness, and reprobation of His once chosen people, the Jews; together with the final impenitence of Judas, and the eternal damnation of so many millions of souls, for whom He is now offering Himself in sacrifice, every one of whom He loves more than His own life. Add to this His grief at seeing the unspeakable desolation of His blessed Mother, and of all His friends, and Himself left without any manner of relief or comfort from any creature whatsoever, and even forsaken by His heavenly Father, and given up to the will and pleasure of His enemies. Ah! Christians, no tortures can be comparable to those of the soul!

3. Consider that besides these sufferings, both of body and soul, which our Lord endures on the Cross, for love of us, He was pleased, moreover, to suffer in all other ways to which any mortal can be liable in this life. He suffers in His honour, by the disgrace of being crucified between two thieves, and loaded with all kinds of reproaches and affronts; He suffers in His reputation, by outrages and calumnies; He suffers in His goods, by being stripped of His very clothes (the all He had in this world), and exposed naked to shame and cold; .He suffers from all sorts of people, from Jews and Gentiles, great and small, priests and laity, all conspiring as much as they can to add to His affliction. His enemies insult and triumph over Him, His friends are ashamed of Him, those whom He had favoured with His miracles declare against Him; His disciples keep at a distance,

and are afraid of being involved in His punishment. His eyes see nothing but what may add to His anguish, His ears hear nothing but injuries and blasphemies, His palate is afflicted with a mortal thirst, and His body, by its weight, is a continual and most grievous torment to Him. O sweet Jesus, how dearly hast Thou paid for my sins!

Conclusion. Station thyself at the foot of the Cross, and there contemplate, in the sufferings of thy Saviour, the enormity of thy sins, and the goodness of God, that thou mayest learn how to detest thy sins and to love thy God.

HOLY THURSDAY.

On our Saviour's preaching from the Cross.

1. Consider that the whole life and doctrine of Christ was a continual lesson to His followers, to renounce self-love, with its three wretched branches, viz., the lust of the flesh, that is, the love of sensual pleasures; the lust of the eyes, that is, the love of the perishable goods of this world; and the pride of life. These are the unhappy sources of all our evils, which withdraw us from our allegiance to God, and make us exchange the fountain of life for poisonous waters that can never satisfy our thirst. These are the foundations of a worldly and sinful life, and the broad road to death and hell. Alas! we love ourselves and our own will more than God; we are ever full of ourselves, sensual, covetous, presumptuous, as if we were something, and we can bear with nothing that opposes or contradicts us. But mark, in particular, the sermon which the Son of God preaches from the Cross, and see how loudly He condemns, from that pulpit, all the illusions of our self-love, with the maxims and practices of the world, and the unhappy attachment of worldlings to their carnal and sensual affections. Remember that what He suffers is all by His own choice, and this not only to the end that He may expiate our sins, but also in order to undeceive us in the preposterous judgment we make of things, and to teach us to embrace what He embraces, to despise what He despises, and to condemn what He condemns. Learn then, my soul, at the foot of the Cross, to overcome thy pride, by the great example of the voluntary humiliations of the Son of God; thy love of the world, by His voluntary poverty and by His being stripped of all things, and abandoned by all; and thy love of pleasure, by His voluntary sufferings and inexpressible torments.

2. Consider that Jesus Christ, in offering Himself upon the Cross a sacrifice to His Father, without any manner of reserve, and in dying in pure obedience to His heavenly will, preaches another excellent sermon to us, containing the whole perfection of a spiritual life; which consists in giving our whole selves to

God, and in being obedient unto death. Yes, Christians, if you desire to be perfect, you must learn from your dying Saviour to make this offering of yourselves without reserve, to His Father and your Father; you must join your offering with His, and make it by His hands, that it may be acceptable. You must make it every day, and oftentimes in the day. Give Him, then, daily your soul and body; give Him your understanding, your memory, and your will; give Him your whole being, with all that belongs to it, both for time and eternity, and He will give His whole self to you. O happy exchange! Offer yourself daily to do for Him whatsoever He pleases, to suffer for Him whatsoever He pleases; dedicate yourself eternally to His love, and resolve to die a thousand deaths, rather than renounce in anything the obedience you owe to this your Father, Maker, King, and God.

3. Consider the particular lessons our Lord also gives in His seven last dying words upon the Cross. 1. Of perfect charity to our enemies, by His praying for His, and excusing them to His Father: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." 2. Of mercy and compassion for sinners, by the plenary indulgence He imparts to the penitent thief: "Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." 3. Of duty to our parents, in recommending His Virgin Mother to the care of His beloved disciple, and of a filial devotion to her, as recommended for a mother to us all: "Woman, behold thy son.—— Behold thy mother." 4. Of an earnest thirst for the conversion and salvation of all men, by that which He expresses in this word, "I thirst." 5. Of earnest prayer to God under anguish and desolation, by the fervour of His prayer, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" 6. Of perseverance to the end, till we have consummated, that is, completely finished, the work for which we came into the world, by that word of His, "It is consummated." 7. Of committing ourselves, both in life and death by perfect resignation, into the hands of God, by His great example: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." Let us learn these last lessons of our dying Lord!

Conclusion. Frequent daily this school of the Cross, if thou wouldst learn to be wise indeed. But more especially take care to study well, at the foot of the Cross, those two most essential lessons, the renouncing thy own will, and embracing the will of God, by a resolute conformity and obedience, even unto death.

GOOD FRIDAY.

On our Saviour's Death upon the Cross.

1. Consider how our Lord having uttered those last words of His, "Father, into Thy hand I commend My Spirit," with a loud

and strong voice, bows down His head, in perfect submission to His Father's will, and gives up the ghost, to consummate the great sacrifice of the redemption of the world. Stand astonished, my soul, in the contemplation of this incomprehensible mystery, that life itself should die to deliver thee from the second death, and to impart to thee eternal life. Consider well who this is that hangs dead before thy eyes? The Word, the Wisdom, the Son of the eternal God; the Lord of glory, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the great Creator of Heaven and earth. But how strangely has He debased Himself! how wonderfully is He metamorphosed for love of thee! Draw near, however, in spirit, cast thyself at the foot of the Cross, and there exercise thyself in acts of faith, hope, love, and contrition for thy sins; pour forth, in the sight of thy God, acts of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; make a total oblation of thyself to thy crucified Saviour, to be His, both in life and death, in time and eternity.

2. Consider how our Lord, in the midst of all the ignominies and torments of His passion and death, begins to reign from the Cross, and is even there highly honoured and exalted by His heavenly Father. The title that hangs over His head declares Him to be the King of the Jews, even the Messias, of whom the Prophets had delivered such wonders. All nature loudly proclaims Him her King and her God; the sun withdraws his light for the whole three hours that He hangs upon the Cross; at His death the earth trembles, the rocks are split, the monuments are opened, the dead arise, the veil of the Temple that hangs before the inner sanctuary is rent from top to bottom, to show that the law and its figures are now all accomplished, and the sanctuary of heaven laid open. See, my soul, how He already begins from the Cross to verify what He had said (St. John xii. 32), "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to Myself." One of the thieves crucified with Him is the first to experience this miraculous attraction, and in an instant is changed into a saint; the centurion, or captain of the soldiers who assisted at the execution, is the next, and loudly declares Him to be the Son of God: "and all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, return striking their breasts" (St. Luke xxiii. 48). O dear Jesus, let my poor heart share also in this mercy; look down upon it now from Thy Cross, which Thou hast chosen for the throne of Thy mercy and grace, and be pleased to draw it also to Thyself, and to make it wholly Thine henceforth and for ever.

3. Consider how our Lord by His death triumphs over all His enemies. He casts out Satan, the ruler of this wicked world, from his usurped dominion, and binds him in chains, by greatly abridging all the power of death, sin, and hell; He judges and condemns the world with all its favourite maxims; He exposes

and pulls down human pride; He shows forth the folly of worldly wisdom, and the vanity and deceitfulness of earthly honours, riches, and carnal pleasures, and of all that is not conformed to the Cross; and He sets up this victorious standard for all nations, as the royal ensign of His kingdom, under which His true soldiers shall ever fight, and triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil, till they arrive at the crown of life, which He has purchased for them by His death. But see how, in the midst of His triumphs, He invites in a particular manner all poor sinners to His mercy. See how, with His head bowed down towards them, He offers them the kiss of peace; see how His arms are open to receive them; see how His gaping wounds invite them to come and shelter themselves there from the divine wrath. Let us embrace these His offers of mercy, on this day of mercy!

Conclusion. Celebrate on this day, in the best manner thou art able, thy Saviour's victory over sin and hell. Adore Him most profoundly under all the ignominy of His Cross; acknowledge Him for thy King, for the true King of thy heart, and beg that He would henceforward abolish the reign of sin in thee. Embrace with all thy affection the sacred wounds of His Passion, and choose them for the place of thy habitation for ever.

HOLY SATURDAY.

On our Saviour's Burial.

1. Consider how, after our Lord had expired upon the Cross, one of the soldiers opened His side with a spear, making a wide and deep wound, out of which there presently issued blood and water, to wash and cleanse us from all our stains. See, my soul, how the heart of thy Saviour is now laid open for thee. Enter it in spirit, through this gate: make it thy dwelling place for evermore. Consider in this mysterious blood and water, issuing from the side of our Lord, the heavenly sacraments, which issued from His wounds (inasmuch as they have all their virtue from His sacred Passion), but especially the sacrament of His body and blood, and that of the sacred laver of baptism. See also here, how our second Adam being now cast into the deep sleep of death, His side is opened to form from thence His Church, designed to be His everlasting bride.

2. Consider how Joseph of Arimathea (who before durst not declare himself a disciple of Christ), having obtained of Pilate leave to take away His body for burial, being accompanied by Nicodemus, and joined in this last duty by St. John and other disciples, unnailed the sacred body, and took it down from the Cross. Hasten, Christian soul, in spirit, and offer thy service upon this occasion; receive into thy arms the dead body of thy

Redeemer, and lay it on the sacred lap of His Virgin Mother ; and learn from her whole comportment at this melancholy ceremony, the sentiments of a most affectionate devotion towards the Passion and death of her Son. Join in embalming thy Saviour's body and wrapping it up in clean linen, and laying it in a new monument ; by learning the exercise of those virtues, which are signified by the aromatical spices and perfumes, and by that clean linen, and new monument. Especially, whenever thou approachest the body of our Lord in the blessed sacrament, see thou take with thee the sweet odours of devotion, a pure conscience, and the cleanness of the new man.

3. Consider how our Lord lying in His monument, verifies that of the Psalmist (Ps. lxxxvii.). "I am counted among them that go down to the pit ; I am become as a man without help, free among the dead. Like the slain sleeping in the sepulchres, whom thou rememberest no more ; and they are cast off from thy hand. They have laid me in the lower pit, in the dark, and in the shadow of death. Thou hast put away my acquaintance far from me," &c. Yes, my soul, thy Saviour lies now shut up in a lonesome monument in darkness, like one dead for always ! and as such is left and forsaken by His living friends and acquaintance. See thou leave Him not, but stay with Him, and watch at His sepulchre in prayer. Weep there over Him tears of compassion for His sufferings, of compunction for thy sins, and of tender love for His infinite goodness, and His love for thee.

Conclusion. Keep thyself always near to thy Saviour, by daily meditating on His life and death ; and thou mayest confidently hope that He will always be near to thee, both in life and death.

EASTER DAY.

On the Resurrection of our Lord.

1. Consider how the soul of our Saviour, immediately after His death, went to visit and comfort the spirits of the just, to release them from their long confinement, and by His presence to change their prison into a paradise of delights. How happy, how joyful a day was this to all the patriarchs and prophets, when they were first blessed with the sight of Him for whom they had longed for so many ages ! How glorious was the sight of His triumph over the powers of darkness ; of His breaking down the strongholds of hell, and giving a plenary indulgence to as many souls as were capable of it, by their having died in the true faith, and in the state of grace. In the meantime, whilst the soul of our Lord is exercising this charity, the blind malice of His enemies suggests to them, to make fast His sepulchre, and

to guard it with soldiers, under pretence of preventing His disciples from stealing away His body, and then publishing that He was risen from the dead. But how vain are the projects of men against the decrees of God! All this industry of theirs serves but to put the resurrection of our Lord out of dispute; by rendering it absolutely impossible for His disciples to steal Him away (even had their terror and trouble allowed them the thought of such an enterprise). So true is that of the wise man (Prov. xxi. 30), "There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord."

2. Consider how early in the morning of Easter Sunday, being the third day, the day appointed for our Lord's resurrection, His soul returns in triumph from the regions below, and entering His sacred body, imparts to it a new and immortal life. Instead of the winding-sheet in which it had been wrapped, it is now clothed with all the glorious qualities decreed for the bodies of the saints, in a supereminent degree; and so comes forth without resistance through the monument although it was hewn out of a rock, and closed with a very great stone, unperceived by the guards, who were not worthy to see Him in this glorious state. Yet that they and all the world might know He was risen indeed, they felt a great earthquake, and an angel, visibly descending from heaven, removed the stone that covered the entrance of the monument, and sat down upon it. The sight of this bright messenger of Heaven carried with it such terror, that the guards became like men dead, and as soon as they were able to recover themselves, ran away into the city, publishing the wonders they had seen, until the chief priests and elders silenced them with a bribe. Rejoice thou, my soul, to see thy Saviour thus victorious over all His enemies, and learn from this great example to bear up with courage under all thou mayest have to suffer from the wickedness of men, trusting in God, that He will one day turn all to thy greater good.

3. Consider those words of the Psalmist, which are applied by the Church, in the office of this day, to the Resurrection of our Lord: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad, and rejoice therein" (Ps. cxvii.). Yes, Christian souls, if you have taken part in the sufferings of your Redeemer, by affections of compassion and grief, at the sight of all those outrages and torments He endured in the course of His Passion, it is just you should now rejoice at the sight of His resurrection, victorious over death and hell, and His entry on a new and everlasting life, so that He cannot die nor suffer any more. Rejoice then with a holy joy in the Lord, and join with the Church on this day in her repeated Alleluias, because your best Friend, your true Lover, your dear Father, your King, your Lord and God, is risen again, and this is the day of His triumph; He is now out of all reach of His enemies, and shall live and reign glorious for

evermore. But see, my soul, whether thou art in proper dispositions to celebrate with this holy joy the resurrection of thy Lord? Hast thou endeavoured to die with Him, in order to rise again with Him? Hast thou put off the old man and his deeds? Hast thou crucified the flesh and its lusts? Or does not sin still live and reign in thee? If so, how melancholy a reflection must it be to think that this monster, for the destruction of which Christ died, should still keep thee under slavery, struggling with the worst of deaths, whilst thou art celebrating the festival of thy Saviour's rising to a new and immortal life.

Conclusion. If thou desirest to have a share in the triumphs of thy Redeemer, imitate His death, by dying to thy sins, that so thou mayest also imitate His Resurrection, and walk henceforward in newness of life, after the great model given to thee by Jesus Christ.

EASTER MONDAY.

On the Lessons we are to learn from the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1. Consider that, according to the doctrine of the Apostle (Rom. iv. 25), "Christ was delivered up to death for our sins, and rose again for our justification;" inasmuch as His rising again from the dead was designed to be the model of our resurrection from the death of sin to the life of grace. But in what must our resurrection imitate that of Jesus Christ? First, we must imitate Him, by rising verily and indeed, that is, truly and really, and not in appearance only. Alas! how many at this time of Easter pretend to rise again with Christ, by going to confession and communion, according to the custom of Christians, and yet after all only deceive themselves, and impose upon others, with false appearances of life, and never rise in reality. Because they do this great work but by halves, their heart is not changed, they do not effectually renounce their sins; their pretended resurrection is but an empty, airy phantom; they are still dead in their sins. See, my soul, that this be never thy case. What will it avail thee to deceive thyself and thy confessor with these treacherous appearances of a false life, which can only serve to plunge thee deeper into the worst of deaths!

2. Consider that when Christ rose again from the dead, He quitted His monument, He left His winding sheet behind Him, and retained nothing at all of death, and from that time had little conversation with mortals, but only with His heavenly Father; to teach us, that if we would rise with Him we also must quit our winding sheets and monuments, and all the appurtenances of death, by renouncing bad company, and the dangerous occasions of sin, by keeping our passions under, and by breaking

the force of all former bad habits, till no symptoms of death remain in us. But then, in order to walk in this newness of life, we must try as much as we can, to walk with God, by inward solitude and recollection of spirit; and to have our conversation in heaven, by frequent and fervent prayer. Give ear to the Apostle (Col. iii.), "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God; mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then shall you also appear with Him in glory." Oh, that we were always possessed with these sentiments! Oh, that we could die to all things else, that we might truly live in God, with Christ, and through Christ!

3. Consider that "Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more: death shall have no more dominion over Him" (Rom. vi. 9). So that if we would imitate His resurrection, we also must rise in such a manner from the death of sin, as to die no more by returning to our sins; but to "reckon ourselves henceforward to be dead to sin, but alive to God. in Christ Jesus our Lord" (ver. 11). This then is the great lesson we must learn from the Resurrection of Christ, we must rise with Him, so as to continue for ever to live with Him, and to return no more to the dominion of death. Ah! Christians, if you be now risen indeed from the death of sin to the life of grace, dread a second death, by relapsing into mortal sin, above all other evils that can possibly befall you. Remember that if the devil who has been now cast out of your soul, should take possession of you once more by a relapse, he would "bring with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and your last state would be worse than the first" (Matt. xii. 45).

Conclude with a hearty resolution of imitating, in all these particulars, the resurrection of our Lord. But especially take precautions against returning any more to the death of sin, after rising with Christ to a new life. To prevent so great an evil, be diligent in all your religious duties, be constant and fervent in prayer, fly all dangerous occasions, and keep up in your soul a perpetual horror of that hellish monster, Sin. Beg of God daily and hourly, that you may rather die a thousand deaths, than once consent to deadly sin.

EASTER TUESDAY.

On our Lord's showing Himself to His Disciples after His Resurrection.

1. Consider the haste our Lord made to comfort His blessed Mother and His afflicted disciples, by manifesting Himself to them immediately after His resurrection. As to His blessed

mother, though the gospel is silent, we cannot doubt that she was favoured with an early visit; that as she loved Him most, and partook more than any other in the sorrows of His Passion, so she would also in the joy of His resurrection. Learn, my soul, from hence, that the way for thee also to experience something of the visits and comforts of heaven is to suffer and to love. The good women who went early in the morning to the monument with their sweet spices and ointments, to anoint the body of our Lord, were likewise favoured first with a vision of Angels, and then with a sight of Christ Himself, to teach us that the true way to find Christ is to rise early to seek Him; to go in quest of Him with the aromatic perfumes of ardent desires and devout affections; and to persevere in the search, without being discouraged by apprehensions of difficulties and opposition. These holy women are concerned who should roll away the stone for them from the monument, that they might get at the body of our Lord, for it was exceeding great; but as they came to the place, they saw the stone rolled away, to teach us, that if we are constant in our good resolutions, God will remove the difficulties we apprehend, or enable us by His grace to overcome them.

2. Consider the favour our Lord was pleased to show to penitent sinners at His resurrection, by honouring Magdalene amongst women, and Peter amongst men, with His first visits. Magdalene from the time of her conversion had constantly adhered to our Lord; she followed Him even to the cross, she attended on Him there till He gave up the ghost, she saw His body laid in the monument, and after the repose of the Sabbath-day, she was up before light, and was the first at the monument with her perfumes; when she found Him not, she ran to the Apostles to tell them that His body was taken away. Peter and John ran to the monument, and finding the linen cloths lying without the body went their way home again, but Magdalene stayed and continued her search, weeping and lamenting that she could not find Him whom her soul loved! till at length she saw His heavenly messengers, and shortly after Himself in person, and was sent by Him, as an apostle, to carry to the apostles themselves the joyful tidings of His resurrection. O happy tears of love! O happy perseverance! See my soul, thou seek thy Lord in like manner, and thou wilt infallibly find Him.

3. Consider that Peter, who from the time of his fall had been continually weeping and bitterly bewailing his sin, was the first the apostles favoured with the sight of our Lord (1 Cor. xv. 5, and Luke xxiv. 34). At the first news, brought by Magdalene, of our Saviour's body being missing, he took the alarm, and ran to the monument, and not finding the body there, went home, believing it had been taken away. But our Lord was pleased to remove this error by manifesting Himself to him, and showing him that body alive which he sought among the dead. What

sentiments of confusion and repentance, for having denied the Lord of Glory, mixed with a holy joy, at the sight of Him risen from the dead, filled the soul of this Apostle! How did he cast himself at the feet of his Lord, and confess his crime, and how lovingly was he received to mercy, and favoured on the spot with a plenary indulgence and absolution! And not only that, but to show the unspeakable bounty of our Lord to repenting sinners, a little while after, when our Lord manifested Himself to him again (John xxi.), He was pleased to advance him to the supreme pastoral charge over all His flock, by committing to him all His lambs and all His sheep, and to promise him the glory of following Him, even to the dying upon a cross for Him, all in consequence of that most ardent love of which He three times required a profession of him, "Lovest thou me more than these?" as if in opposition to his three denials.

Conclude, whatever thy case may be, and however thou mayest have denied thy Saviour by word or deed, to return now to Him by repentance and love, and "if thy sins be as red as scarlet, they shall be made whiter than snow" (Isa. i. 18). Love is the shortest way to the remission of sins, and to all other good.

EASTER WEDNESDAY.

On our Lord showing Himself to the Disciples after going to Emmaus.

Luke xxiv.

1. Consider how two of the disciples, going from Jerusalem to a neighbouring town called Emmaus, on the very day of our Lord's resurrection, while they were discoursing together in the way, and making Him the subject of their conversation, were also favoured with His presence, yet in such a manner as not to know Him. He overtook them in the way, and joined their company, and after upbraiding them with their slowness of belief, explained to them the Scriptures that related to His passion and resurrection, and enkindled in their hearts the fire of devotion. See, Christians, the great advantage of pious conversation, such especially as has Christ for its subject; it even draws Him down from heaven into our company. We may in some measure apply to it what our Lord says (Matt. xxviii. 20), "Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." What a pity, then, there should be generally so little of God in the conversation of Christians! Alas, how can this forgetfulness of God be reconciled with our loving Him? We naturally delight to speak of what we love; "for from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" how then can we flatter ourselves that the love of God is master of our hearts, when we

seldom care to speak of Him? Surely this is not the way to engage Christ to be in our company.

2. Consider that our Lord was not known at first by these disciples, because their faith in Him was weak and imperfect. See, my soul, if the weakness of thy faith be not also the reason why He does not manifest Himself to thee, so as to let thee know Him indeed, as the Saints have done. St. Gregory takes notice that these disciples were not enlightened so as to know Christ, whilst they only heard His words, but were quickly enlightened when fulfilling His commandments, by the exercise of hospitality and charity, to teach us, that the way to come to the knowledge of God, and of those truths which as yet we are ignorant of, is to practise, to the best of our power, what we know already of His heavenly will. These disciples "knew our Lord in the breaking of bread," to teach us that there is no better way to come to the perfection of the knowledge and love of God than a worthy participation of the bread of life in the blessed Eucharist.

3. Consider how these disciples took notice, that their hearts were burning within them, whilst they were in company of our Lord, and enjoying His heavenly conversation (Luke xxiv. 32). My soul, dost thou desire to experience something of these sacred flames? Seek them in the company and conversation of Christ. Alas! the reason why thou art so lukewarm, or rather, downright cold in thy devotions, is the continual dissipation of thy thoughts at other times, so as to keep Christ away from thee and rob thee of His sweet conversation. How happy mightest thou be, if by banishing all these distractions by a spirit of recollection, thou wouldst endeavour to keep thyself always close to thy Saviour, and, like the ancient Saints, to walk with Him! Diligence in this would make thee begin to enjoy a heaven upon earth.

Conclude to study well these lessons, which our Lord desires we should learn from His manifestations of Himself after His resurrection. But especially learn to seek always the happiness of His company and conversation in thy own interior: there is the school of divine love.

EASTER THURSDAY.

On our Lord's manifesting Himself to all the Apostles.

Luke xxiv. John xx.

1. Consider, how on the evening of the same day of our Lord's resurrection, when the doors were shut where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews, our Saviour came in and stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace be to you!" and then showed them the wounds of His hands, of His

feet, and of His side. Admire the qualities of His glorious body now risen from the dead, which like a spirit passes through the doors, and is seen on a sudden in the midst of His disciples, and yet shows itself to be true and palpable flesh, by exhibiting those sacred wounds to be felt by their hands. See how on this occasion He at once both confirms their faith and inflames their love, by bearing about Him those marks of His passion, the most convincing testimonies of His love. My soul, thou hast this same glorious Body with all Its endowments in the blessed Sacrament; and though thou neither seest It, nor feelest His wounds with thy bodily senses, thy faith assures thee that He is there, and discovers to the inward eye both His passion endured for love of thee, and the glory of His resurrection. Let this suffice to enkindle the fire of His love in thy heart; do not desire to see or to feel His wounds like Thomas; nor to put thy hand but thy heart into His side, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed" (John xx. 29).

2. Consider how our Lord said again to His disciples, "Peace be to you; as the Father hath sent Me, I also send you." Then breathing upon them, He said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." See how ample this authority is which He here imparts to His Apostles, and to their lawful successors, that is, to the Pastors of His true Church descending from the Apostles. As His heavenly Father sent Him, even so He sends them, furnished as He was, with all spiritual power and jurisdiction, for the rule of His Church, and the dispensation of His Word and of His Sacraments; and commissioned by Him as He was by His Father. Give thanks, my soul, to thy Saviour, for having left, for thy benefit, this ample power and commission with the Pastors of His Church, and furnished thee by this means with guides divinely commissioned, and divinely assisted, and given to them the keys, that they might open heaven to thee. See thou despise not the ordinance of God, nor proudly resist His commissioners, to thy own condemnation.

3. Consider more in particular the power of forgiving or retaining sins, here imparted by our Lord to the lawful Pastors of His Catholic Church. "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," said He, "whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." In these words our Lord was pleased to communicate His divine Spirit, the Holy Ghost, to His disciples and their successors, in order to make them His delegates in the court of conscience to sit as judges there, to take cognizance of all spiritual causes and to pass sentence, either in favour of penitent sinners, to loose them from their sins by absolution, or to bind them as the case should require, by censures, penances, or delay of absolution. Give thanks for this sacred institution, sovereignly wholesome to

Christian souls, in which poor sinners who desire to return to their God may, by applying to the delegates of Christ, have the sentence of eternal damnation that stood against them reversed, and their absolution pronounced on earth, ratified in heaven, upon the easy condition of an humble and secret confession, joined with a hearty repentance; and in consequence of such absolution, may be again received and admitted to the participation of all those goods from which their sins had excluded them.

Conclude to adore, praise, and give thanks to our Lord, for all these blessings He brought with Him at His resurrection, and imparted not only to His disciples then living, but entailed upon His Church for ever. Particularly acknowledge and embrace that last legacy, of His perpetual presence with His Church, which He bequeathed on the same occasion, in the three last verses of the Gospel of St. Matthew, when He said: "All power is given to Me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

EASTER FRIDAY.

On the Peace of a Christian.

1. Consider that as our Saviour, the night before His passion, bequeathed His peace to His disciples, saying (John xiv. 27), "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you;" so also after His resurrection, He three times wished them His peace, saying, "Peace be to you" (John xx.). But what kind of peace is this that He so much inculcates, and so earnestly desires to impart to us? Not the peace which the world pretends to give, which is false and deceitful like itself: they say "peace, peace, and there is no peace" (Ezek. xiii. 10); but "the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding" (Philip. iv. 7). A threefold peace; viz., peace of the soul with God, peace with every neighbour, and peace with herself. It is both the duty and the happiness of a Christian to maintain this triple peace. And first, whosoever desires any degree of happiness, either here or hereafter, must take care to keep an inviolable peace with God, by ever avoiding wilful sin, which is enmity with God. For how can there be any good for them that are at war with God. "Who hath ever resisted Him, and hath had peace?" (Job ix. 4). "The wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest; and the waves therefore cast up dirt and mire: there is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord God" (Isa. lvii. 20, 21).

2. Consider that the Christian cannot maintain peace with God, if he does not also "follow peace with all men" (Heb. xii.

14); "and as much as lies in him, keep peace with all" (Rom. xii. 18). "For as no man can love God who does not love his neighbour" (1 John iv.); so no man can be at peace with God, who breaks peace with his neighbour. It is then another branch, both of the duty and of the happiness of a Christian, to be at peace with every man, at least so far as lies in him, and in the unfeigned disposition of his soul to renounce all animosity and rancour, all discord and contention, all malice and envy, and whatsoever else is opposite to fraternal charity; and to learn to bear and forbear, which are the two great means of keeping peace with our neighbours. When on our part we forbear giving them any offence or provocation, either by word or deed, and at the same time bear with Christian meekness and charity all the offences or provocations we receive at their hands, and strive to overcome them by rendering good for evil, how amiable is this character of the peaceable Christian! How much happier is such a soul, than one that is always at war with one neighbour or another, and always in a storm at home, in its own interior!

3. Consider that another necessary branch of the Christian's peace is to be at peace within himself, by striving to banish whatsoever may disturb the tranquillity of his soul. This inward peace, when it is perfect, is a certain foretaste of heaven; it is a kind of heaven upon earth. In such souls God is pleased to dwell, of whom the royal prophet sings (Ps. lxxv.), that "His place is in peace, and His abode in Sion." To come at this happy peace (besides taking care to keep peace with God by a clear conscience, and with every neighbour by concord and charity), we must have our passions mortified, our affections well ordered and regulated, and our desires restrained; we must banish all hurry and over-eagerness, all sadness and melancholy, all scrupulous fears, anxious care, and uneasiness about the things of this world; and in all things we must conform ourselves to the holy will of God. Practise these lessons, my soul, and thou wilt be at peace, so far as the condition of thy mortal pilgrimage will allow.

Conclude ever to aim at this threefold peace with thy God, thy neighbour, and thyself; pray daily for it, and whatsoever fear, affection, or desire, or any other thing offers to disturb thy heart, shut the door against it as an enemy, as a messenger of Satan, who comes to rob thee of thy treasure, the peace of thy soul.

EASTER SATURDAY.

On Perseverance in Good.

1. Consider that every Christian ought at this time, pursuant to the precept of the Church of God, to have made his peace with God, and to have signed and sealed it with a worthy communion. It is the business of every Christian, now at least, to begin a new life, and to walk henceforward in newness of life, even to the end. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life," saith our Lord (Apoc. ii. 10). Alas! what will it avail us to have made a good beginning at this time, if, after having been "enlightened, and having tasted the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost" (Heb. iv. 4), we should quickly fall away and return to our former darkness, and to husks of swine, under the slavery of Satan? Would not our latter condition become worse than the former? That this may never be our case, we must consider the means that may effectually preserve us from relapsing into mortal sin, and maintain us in the happy state of the grace and love of God. In particular we must labour to establish in our souls a horror of the dreadful evil of sin, and of all the dangerous occasions of it; to keep up in ourselves a penitential spirit for the past, joined with a lively sense of that infinite mercy of God who kept us so long out of hell, and so graciously received His prodigal children when they offered to return to Him, and with a firm resolution to turn our backs upon Him no more by wilful sin. How happy is that Christian who is ready to lay down his life, rather than return any more to sin!

2. Consider that another great means to persevere in good, is to live by rule and order, to renounce an idle life, as the mother of all evil; to regulate our time and our daily exercises; to be constant in the performance of our devotions, and in frequenting the sacraments; and to take care to do well all that we do. Sanctity and perfection do not so much depend upon doing extraordinary actions, as upon doing our ordinary actions extraordinarily well. Now we shall do them extraordinarily well, if we do them with a pure intention, for the love of God; and if we take care to season them with frequent and fervent aspirations to Him. Thus, like the ancient Saints, shall we walk with God, and be perfect. This is the surest way to perseverance.

3. Consider that in order to persevere in grace, it will be necessary to set out with, and to continue in the conviction, that we have not a more dangerous enemy to our souls than our own self-love, with all its branches and passions; that gratifying our own humours, is gratifying a mortal enemy; that we must deny, renounce, and hate ourselves in this life, if we would save our-

selves for eternity. In a word, the mortification of our passions, and the victory over ourselves, is the sovereign means of perseverance. In order to this, every Christian ought to study well to know himself, and the true state of his own interior, that he may discover what passions are predominant there, and may turn all the forces of his soul against them, till he has quite subdued them. This warfare is one of the most essential duties of every disciple of Jesus Christ: no one shall be crowned by Him that has not fought and conquered himself. "To him that overcometh He will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God" (Apoc. ii. 7).

Conclusion. In order to persevere in good, practise well all these lessons, and particularly be earnest with God in prayer, that He may keep thee from sin. Beg of God, every day, that thou mayest rather die a thousand deaths than commit a mortal sin!

LOW SUNDAY.

On the Sacrament of Baptism.

1. Consider that we are often put in mind by the Church in the office of this time, of our baptism, to the end that we may be rightly sensible of the dignity to which we have been raised by this sacrament, and of the obligations incumbent upon us in consequence of the same. Baptism is to our souls the gate of life, the introduction to all that is good. It is called by the apostle, (Tit. iii. 5), "the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost:" inasmuch as we, who by our descent from Adam, were born in sin, children of wrath, slaves of Satan, and liable to eternal damnation, are cleansed from sin, and sanctified in this sacrament, by "the laver of water in the word of life" (Eph. v. 25), in virtue of the blood of Christ, here applied to our souls, and by which we receive a new birth, and are regenerated and renewed, being "born again of water and the Holy Ghost" (John iii. 5) to a new and everlasting life, and are made children of the living God, and heirs to His eternal kingdom. See, my soul, and admire the riches of the bounty of thy God, poured out in thy favour, in this sacrament. But take care never to forfeit these excellent treasures by sin, nor to degenerate from this heavenly birth by unworthy conversation.

2. Consider that by baptism we are incorporated in Christ, and made living members of His mystical body, which is His Church; we are made Christians, brethren of Christ, and temples of His Holy Spirit: we who before "were not His people, are now the people of God" (1 Pet. ii. 10), "a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people, called out of darkness into the admirable light of Christ" (ver. 9). We are

dedicated, sanctified, and consecrated to God by this sacrament, to be irrevocably His, eternally devoted to His divine love. O happy dedication! How little hast thou hitherto reflected on these truths! How little hast thou considered the dignity conferred upon thee in baptism! Remember that what is once dedicated to God, ought to remain always His, and that it is a sacrilege to profane or violate what is once consecrated to Him. See then, how pure and holy thy whole life ought to be, in consequence of thy being dedicated to God in baptism.

3. Consider that "all who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in His death, for we are buried together with Him by baptism unto death, that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 3, 4). Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, and that we may serve sin no longer (vi. 6), so that henceforward, in consequence of our baptism, "we must reckon ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God, in Christ Jesus our Lord" (vi. 11), and therefore "we must not let sin reign in our mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof" (vi. 12). But as "Christ rising from the dead dies no more, death shall no more have dominion over Him" (vi. 9), so we must now die no more by sin, sin must no more have dominion over us. For "as many of us as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27), and ought to live, so as to show forth the life of Christ in our mortal flesh, that we, too, may be able to say with the apostle: "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal ii. 20). Christians, compare your lives with these divine lessons; see what they ought to be, by the obligation of your baptism, and see what they have hitherto been; now, at least, labour in earnest to begin to live worthily of your calling, and of the glorious name and character of a Christian, and child of God.

Conclusion. Bear always in mind both the dignity to which you have been raised by your baptism, and the obligation of it; and ever show forth in your lives that you are Christians indeed, by a constant imitation both of the death and resurrection of the Son of God.

MONDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

On the Covenant of Baptism.

1. Consider that in baptism we make a solemn covenant with God, by which He, on His part, adopts us for children, admits us to all the great and glorious advantages and prerogatives which belong to His children, and gives us an unquestionable right and title to the inheritance of His everlasting kingdom. But then all

this is upon conditions to which we on our part bind ourselves by the strongest engagements and vows, which if we violate, we forfeit both the dignity of the children of God, and all the other excellent treasures we received at our baptism, together with all title either to the favour or the kingdom of God. The first condition by which we engage ourselves to God in baptism, is the promise we there make ever to adhere to Him by a firm and constant faith in all His divine truths. My soul, hast thou been true to this part of thy covenant? The faith which thou hast promised was not a barren speculative belief, like that of those who "make profession of knowing God, but deny Him in their works" (Tit. 1); but a "faith that worketh by charity" (Gal. v. 6): a faith that showeth itself by the life: "the just man liveth by faith." Has thy faith been such?

2. Consider that another article of our baptismal covenant was to wage perpetual war with Satan; to renounce him for ever, with all his works of darkness and sin, and all his pomps of worldly pride and vain-glory, and to adhere to God by a strict and perpetual allegiance to His Divine Majesty. What has thy life hitherto been? Hast thou kept this covenant? Hast thou effectually renounced Satan? Hast thou constantly waged war against that usurper, that cruel tyrant, that mortal enemy of thy God? Or hast thou not suffered him to take possession of thee again by sin? Hast thou not been all thy life long his slave? Have not his works and his pomps had a greater share in thy affections than thy duty and allegiance to thy God? Be confounded at thy past disloyalty and breach of covenant! Dread the consequences of this perfidiousness; repent and amend.

3. Consider that in our baptism, we also engage ourselves to a strict observance of the whole law, and the commandments of our heavenly Father, our King, and our God; but more especially of the great commandment of "loving Him with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with our whole mind, and with our whole strength;" and of "loving our neighbour as ourselves." For, inasmuch as He there adopts us for His children and His heirs, in return He strictly requires of us the obedience due from children to such a Father; with a love of preference of Him before all things else, and a perpetual conformity in all things to His blessed will. See now, my soul, upon how many titles thou belongest to God, and art bound to love and serve Him with all thy powers. Thou art His by creation; He made thee for Himself. Thou art His by redemption; the Son of God has purchased thee with His own blood: and at how dear a rate! Thou art His by dedication, being consecrated to Him in baptism. And thou art His by all the articles of the covenant then made with Him.

Conclusion. Observe, henceforward at least, these thy baptismal vows, and since God claims thy whole being upon so

many titles, give thyself to Him without reserve, for time and eternity, by perfect obedience, conformity, and love. Beg of Him continually, that nothing in life or death may ever be able to separate thee from Him any more.

TUESDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

On the Ceremonies of Baptism.

1. Consider that the ancient ceremonies, used by the Catholic Church, in administering baptism, are very instructive, inasmuch as they show forth both the effects of this sacrament in the soul, and the duties incumbent on those who receive it. The person to be baptized is initiated as it were in Christ, by professing his desire of coming to Him by faith, and the observance of the commandments, and by receiving upon his forehead and his breast the sign of the cross, to signify that the cross and passion of Christ is the source of all our good; that by this sacrament we are dedicated to Christ crucified, and must ever wear His badge, both on our forehead and in our heart. Then the catechumen is seasoned, as it were, by a grain of salt solemnly blessed for that purpose, to signify the salt of true wisdom, and that Christian prudence and discretion which ought to season all we do, as well as the seasoning of divine grace, which is to keep the soul from the corruption of sin. Moreover, to make room for the Spirit of God to come and take possession of the soul and to fix His dwelling there, the Devil is cast out by solemn exorcisms, exsufflations, and prayers, and the senses of the soul are opened as it were to God, by the application of the spittle to the ears and nostrils, with the Ephpheta, pronounced in imitation of our Lord (Mark vii. 34). How great must that grace be, for which the soul is prepared by so many mysterious ceremonies!

2. Consider that after this follows the solemn renunciation of Satan, of all his works, and of all his pomps, as a declaration of eternal war against this mortal enemy; and then to give us to understand what kind of arms we are to furnish ourselves with for this warfare, we are anointed with consecrated oil, on the breast, and between the shoulders, to signify by this outward unction the inward unction of the Holy Ghost, and of His fortifying grace here given, to strengthen our breast with heavenly charity, to love and keep the divine commandments, and to give force to our shoulders to take up our cross, and bear in a Christian manner all the labours, difficulties, and adversities of this mortal pilgrimage. To this is added immediately after baptism another unction, on the top of the head, with the holy Chrism; to signify that we are by baptism incorporated in Christ, the great anointed of the Lord, and are solemnly conse-

crated to God for ever by the unction of His grace. All such things as are anointed with holy Chrism, are by the Church dedicated to God for ever. Hence all Christians are called by St. Peter a kingly priesthood, from partaking in the dignity of Christ, and being anointed through Him with that holy unction, with which God of old anointed His priests, prophets, kings, and martyrs.

3. Consider that immediately after baptism we are clothed with a white linen garment, which the minister of God gives us with these words, "Receive this white garment, which thou shalt carry without spot or stain before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life:" Amen. And then in allusion to the parable of the virgins who went forth with their lamps to meet the bridegroom (Matt. xxv.) and of the servants who with lights in their hands were ever ready to open the door to their Lord (Luke xii.), we receive a lighted taper in our hand with these words, "Receive this burning light, and keep thy baptism so as to be without reproof. Keep the commandments of God that when the Lord shall come to His nuptials, thou mayest meet Him, together with all the saints in the heavenly court, and mayest live with Him for ever and ever." Amen. These ceremonies put us in mind of the strict obligation of leading a holy and innocent life after baptism, of showing forth the light of faith in our lamps, to the edification of all men, and keeping them ever burning with the oil of charity and good works, till we meet our Lord in His heavenly kingdom.

Conclusion. From the consideration of all these mysterious ceremonies used in baptism, conceive in thy soul a great ideal both of the dignity and the obligations of a Christian, and make it the business of thy life to correspond both with the one and the other. But take care, above all things, not to stain that robe of innocence by wilful sin.

WEDNESDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

On the Evil of falling from the Grace of Baptism.

1. Consider that how much the greater the dignity is to which we are raised in baptism, and how much the more excellent the advantages are which we there receive, together with the inestimable treasures of baptismal innocence, grace, and sanctity; so much the more terrible is that fall, by which we forfeit, and lose in a moment all that dignity, with all those advantages and treasures. A dreadful fall indeed! by which the poor soul falls from heaven to hell; from God to the devil; from being a child of God, to be a slave of Satan and of sin that is worse than

Satan; from being the temple of the Holy Ghost, to be the habitation of the wicked one. This abominable tyrant, in the very moment she sins, enters in and takes possession of her; he robs her at once of all her treasures of virtue, grace, and merit, of all her share in Jesus Christ, of all her right and title to His kingdom, and of all true peace and joy; and in exchange for these good things, he offers her nothing but husks of swine, which cannot satisfy her appetite; nothing but mere toys and fooleries, poisonous baits, which delude her with a momentary sweetness, presently followed by bitter remorse, and a long train of other evils, ending in death and hell.

2. Consider the folly and madness of the soul that consents to such an exchange. Alas! she exchanges all her present good, and her title to any good hereafter, either in time or eternity, for a mere bubble, a brutish passion, an irksome slavery, an eternal misery! Ah! unhappy sinner, open thy eyes and see the wretched bargain thou hast made! See how strangely thou hast been deluded, to part with thy God and all thy good, for something so base, so vile, so empty, so filthy, so transitory, so foolish and miserable, accompanied with so much remorse, with so much danger, and with so much falsehood and deceit. Before thy sin, heaven was thine, God Himself was thine; but now thou hast parted with thy God, thou hast sold Him for a mere nothing, thou art no longer His, thou hast made Him thy enemy, thou hast exchanged heaven for hell, thou standest upon the very brink of a miserable eternity; thou art ready to fall down that dreadful precipice. Can any folly or madness bear comparison with this?

3. Consider the enormity of the treason the soul is guilty of when she falls from the grace of baptism. She renounces her allegiance to her King and God, she rebels against Him to follow Satan; she drives Him from His throne which He held within her; she expels Him from His temple to make room for His enemy. She sets up an idol in the house of God, which she worships in contempt of the living God. She violates her solemn vows, she sacrilegiously profanes the temple consecrated to God; she breaks His holy covenant; she treads under foot the precious blood of His Son, and as much as in her lies she crucifies Him again. O my soul, hast thou had no share in all this guilt? Alas! how early didst thou fall from thy baptismal grace into the bottomless pit of sin and misery! how quickly didst thou exchange thy God for Satan! Thou wast strictly bound, in consequence of thy creation, thy redemption, thy baptismal dedication and the covenant then made in thy name, to turn thyself to God, as soon as thou wast capable of knowing Him, and to consecrate thy whole self to His love and service for evermore. Instead of this hast thou not, at thy very first coming to the use of reason, like the rebel angels, turned away from thy

God, by running after empty toys and lying follies, in preference to Him, and thinking but little or nothing of Him?

Conclusion. If thy conscience charge thee with this guilt, bewail for the remainder of thy life the loss thou hast sustained, the misery thou hast incurred, the folly and madness, the heinousness and the enormity of thy fall from God. In order to make amends after the best manner thou art capable of, endeavour now at least, and for every day and hour thou hast yet to come, to make a frequent offering of thy whole self, without reserve, to the love and service of the Divine Majesty.

THURSDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

On the Theological Virtues.

1. Consider that as God is the sovereign spirit, and the sovereign truth, so they who would offer Him an acceptable homage must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John iv. 24), by joining with the external adoration, praise, prayer, and sacrifice, which is offered Him in the Church of God, the internal homage of their hearts, and the pure worship of the three divine virtues of faith, hope, and love. Where these are daily exercised, all is well; there God is, and all good; but where any one of these is wanting, all goes wrong, nothing else can supply that defect. Embrace then, my soul, these three virtues, with thy whole heart and affection, and they will bring thee to God. There is no other way to heaven and a happy eternity, but by faith, hope, and charity.

2. Consider that these three virtues are called theological and divine, from the immediate relation they have to God. They flow from Him into our soul, and they take our soul along with them to Him. They tend to Him as the sovereign object on which they are wholly employed; and they are grounded on Him and His divine attributes as their sole motive and foundation. Thus faith believes in Him as the sovereign truth, and obliges the soul to bow down, and adore Him as such; and to give an undoubted assent to all the truths revealed by Him, because He is the sovereign truth, who neither can deceive nor be deceived. Hope puts her whole trust in Him, worships Him as the inexhaustible source of all good, and raises the soul to a lively expectation of mercy, grace, and salvation from Him; relying upon His almighty power, goodness, promises, and mercy, and the precious blood of His Son. Charity, or divine love, embraces Him above all things; worships Him by offering herself and all things else to Him; loves Him for His own infinite goodness, and all that are made after His image and likeness for His sake. Thus these three virtues derive the excellence which they have above all others, from this immediate relation to the source of all

excellence. See, my soul, thou give them the first place in thy inward house, and continually entertain them there. Make them thy favourites, and they will make thee the favourite of Heaven.

3. Consider that to entertain these divine virtues in the soul, we must make frequent acts of them, otherwise they will quickly fade away and die. The soul that does not often exercise faith, by employing her thoughts upon the great truths of God and eternity, quickly forgets both God and herself, and is thus exposed to all manner of evils. In like manner, where hope is not frequently exercised by the help of prayer and consideration, it quickly degenerates into presumption. And as for charity or love, which is in the nature of a fire that is always active, it must needs die away if it be not maintained and kept alive by frequent exercise. As the just man lives by faith, according to the Scripture, so he must also live by hope and by charity. So that the whole life of a Christian ought to be continually influenced by these three virtues, which cannot be, without frequent acts of all the three. And this is the shortest and easiest way to all perfection.

Conclusion. Labour to acquire, and increase these divine virtues by frequent acts of them; and in order thereunto be diligent in the daily exercise of mental prayer. In this school they are best learnt, improved, and brought to perfection.

FRIDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

On Faith.

1. Consider that "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. xi. 6). This virtue is the groundwork and first foundation of all our good; here we must begin the work of our salvation. But what is faith? Not, as some vainly imagine, a presumptuous confidence of the remission of our sins, and of our justification and eternal beatitude, excluding that humble fear, with which the Christian is taught to work out his salvation (Philip. ii. 12, Rom. xi. 20); but a firm belief of all those things that God has revealed or promised; a close adhesion of the soul to all divine truths, as coming from the eternal truth; a firm assent, a bowing down of the soul to all that God has taught, how much soever above our comprehension or understanding. "Faith," says the Apostle (Heb. xi. 1), "is the substance" (that is, the strong foundation) "of things to be hoped for; the evidence of things that are not seen." These good things we hope for, these truths unseen, are made as it were visible to the soul by faith; she embraces them, she adheres to them with a strong and undoubted assent, she casts down all proud thoughts and imaginations that raise themselves up against these truths of

God, and she directs the whole conduct of her life according to this heavenly rule. This is that divine virtue of faith, to which the Apostle gives those great encomiums (Heb. xi.). This it was that brought forth so many wonderful fruits in the ancient Saints, and made them the friends and favourites of God.

2. Consider that the merit of faith, which makes it so acceptable to God, consists in this, that it pulls down the pride of man, by captivating his understanding, and obliging it to believe what it cannot see, to adore what it cannot conceive, and to submit to truths that it can no ways reach to. Man fell originally from God, by proud affectation of superior and more excellent knowledge than God was pleased to allow him, and which might make him like to God (Gen. iii. 5). And therefore it has pleased His divine Majesty, that the first and most essential step for man to arise from sin, and to return to Him, should be the humble assent of divine faith, which makes a sacrifice of what is most dear to our pride, that is, of the liberty we are so fond of, of thinking as we please in all matters, without restraint or control. It casts down all the powers of the soul to worship truths, generally speaking most incomprehensible to the understanding, opposed to the will, and humbling to the whole man.

3. Consider that the faith which God requires of us, and without which we can neither please Him here, nor be happy with Him hereafter, must be Catholic, that is, it must be universal; it must extend itself to all revealed truths without exception. For as they all equally come from God by divine revelation, and are all built upon the same foundation, are all recommended to our belief by the same authority of the Church of God, and all supported by those strong testimonies and evidences, by which the Scripture and Christianity itself are supported; it would be calling in question the divine veracity, to dispute the truth of any one article duly proposed by the Church; it would be, in effect, the utter loss of all divine faith: because it would be believing by humour, and not by divine authority. Here we may say with St. James (ii. 10), "He that offends in one point, becomes guilty of all;" because he is a rebel against that Truth by whom they are all delivered. Never suffer us, dear Lord, to be rebels to thy divine truth, or proudly to oppose our petty reasoning against any part of Thy word, or the authority established by Thee!

Conclusion. Lay this strong foundation of faith, if thou hopest to raise a spiritual building within thee in which God may choose to dwell, and which may entitle thee to an everlasting dwelling with God. To build upon any other foundation is to build upon sand.

SATURDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

On the grounds of Faith.

1. Consider that divine faith is grounded always upon God's infallible truth, inasmuch as every assent of divine faith is given by the soul upon the motive of divine revelation : she believes all these truths because God has taught them, who is truth itself, and who cannot deceive, nor be deceived. Whosoever believes upon any other motive, and not upon the testimony of God, may have an opinion indeed of heavenly truths, or a human faith concerning them, but falls short of divine faith, which builds itself wholly upon God's truth. And, therefore, divine faith carries with it a a greater and higher degree of certainty than any human science ; because nothing can be so certain, as that truth itself cannot lie, and that what God has taught must needs be true. See, then, my soul, what kind of assent God expects thou shouldst yield to all the truths He has revealed ; He expects thou shouldst bow thyself down to them, earnestly embrace them, and firmly adhere to them, as most certain and divine.

2. Consider that though the only proper motive upon which a Christian believes with divine faith, the truths of religion be divine revelation, or the word and testimony of God, either contained in the Scriptures, or handed down by tradition ; yet this testimony or revelation first delivered to the Saints, must come to us recommended by such evidences as may be sufficient to convince us that God has spoken indeed, and has revealed these truths, and does require our assent to them as divine. Therefore this sovereign truth has been pleased to set such marks upon all the truths that come from Him, and has stamped them in such a manner with His broad seal, as may fully satisfy all sincere seekers and lovers of truth, of their coming indeed from His divine Majesty : so that it would be highly unreasonable for them not to yield to them that assent of faith which is due to divine truths. Of this nature are all the prophecies and miracles, and other arguments of credibility, upon which the Christian religion is grounded, together with the innumerable tokens of divine favour, which recommend to us that illustrious society of the Catholic Church of Christ, which bears testimony to the divinity of all these truths.

3. Consider, by descending to particulars, some of the many strong and weighty arguments and motives that give force to the testimony and authority of this Church of Christ, considered as an illustrious society, bearing witness to those truths which she delivers, as having received them from God Himself. This great and most ancient society is, and has been for 1800 years, spread

far and near through all the world ; she was foreshown and foretold long before by many plain and glorious prophecies ; she was established by Christ and His apostles, by innumerable miracles, the gift of tongues, and other gifts of the Spirit of God ; she was miraculously propagated in a short time throughout the world, in spite of the opposition of the whole earth and of hell. She has been maintained by the blood of millions of martyrs, and by the saintly and miraculous lives of other servants of God, in all ages and in all nations ; she has been embraced and followed by the best and wisest of men, and defended by the most godly and learned. She has in fine, all this time, held forth the light of God to the whole world, by the purity and sanctity of her doctrine, and by its efficacy in the conversion of innumerable sinners, in withdrawing thousands of all conditions from the broad way of the world to a recluse and penitential life, and inspiring thousands of her children with a desire of wholly dedicating themselves to divine love ; so that she has at all times, and in all places, produced many eminent saints, whose whole lives have been standing miracles of divine grace, and testimonies of the truth of that faith and Church which they all professed. These, and many other arguments and motives of credibility, loudly proclaim to all mankind that the hand of God and His truth is, and always has been, with this illustrious society of the Church of Christ ; and that she is to be credited in the testimony she bears to the divine revelation of all she proposes as matter of faith.

Conclusion. Give thanks to the goodness and providence of the Almighty, who has not only revealed to His Church His heavenly truths, to heal our souls of all their maladies, and bring them to the very fountain of health and life, which is with Him ; but also has given such authority to her whom He has made the guardian and depository of His truths, that if we are sincere in seeking, we cannot well fail of finding both her and them. But then, remember that the faith of divine truths, how infallible soever, will never bring thee to God, except it be a living faith that works by charity, in Jesus Christ (Gal. v. 6).

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

On a lively Faith.

1. Consider that the faith to which the word of God gives such high encomiums, and to which it attributes all the great things that have been done by the ancient Saints, is not a dead faith, like that of the devils, or of those wretched souls spiritually possessed by devils, and who have little or no sense of divine truths ; but a lively and active faith, that penetrates into the

invisible things of God, and makes them familiar to the soul; that sets them continually before her eyes in their proper light, and gives them a constant influence over every step that is to be taken in her mortal pilgrimage. Such a faith as this is the source of all good to the soul; it keeps her in remembrance of the presence of God; it teaches her to watch diligently and to pray fervently; it encourages her to hope and to love; it gives her a horror of sin. It completely arms her against her spiritual enemies, with a shield that is proof against all their fiery darts, with the helmet of salvation, and with the sword of the Spirit (which is the word and truth of God), which puts to flight all the legions of hell. But where this lively faith is wanting, all goes to wreck and ruin. Lord, do Thou increase our faith, and make it lively: grant us this true heavenly wisdom, and all good things will come to us along with her, and she will effectually bring us to Thee.

2. Consider how true it is, that the want of a lively faith is the source of all the evils that overrun Christendom. Look into all conditions of Christians, and see how sin and Satan everywhere reign, and how few there are, in comparison, who dedicate themselves in good earnest to what should be their only business. And whence comes all this? Do not these men believe there is a God and an eternity? Do they not all believe that they were made by God in order to a happy eternity? Do they not believe there is a heaven and a hell, and that living in mortal sin is the broad road to hell? Do they not believe in a judgment to come, and in the all-seeing eye ever upon them of Him who is one day to decide their cause according to their works, for life or death everlasting? Surely they believe all this or they are not Christians. But the misfortune is, that their faith in all these, and such like Christian truths, is lulled asleep, or rather is quite dead; it has no influence on their lives, it puts little or no restraint upon their passions and lusts; so that in reality, it is the want of a lively faith that fills the Christian world with all sorts of crimes, and continually crowds hell with souls.

3. Consider that the Christian must come at this lively faith by desiring, seeking, and heartily praying for it. But the most effectual means of arriving at it, is by serious consideration and daily meditation. The great Christian truths relating to God and eternity are very moving, when they are duly weighed and considered; but they make little or no impression upon worldlings, who live in a perpetual forgetfulness of them. To bring forth a lively faith in the soul, they must take deep root there. But how shall they take deep root, if they are not suffered to sink deep into the soul by consideration? Hence the great difference between the good and the bad Christian, the saint and the sinner, is that the one thinks, and the other does not think; the one keeps his faith alive by frequently meditating on divine truths; the other's

faith is dead, and his whole soul is laid waste with utter desolation, because he seldom or never thinks in his heart.

Conclusion. Labour to acquire and maintain this lively faith, by praying well and living well, but more especially by thinking well; for without this, thou wilt have little or no sense of God in thy prayer, and little or no sign of God in thy life.

MONDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

On divine Hope.

1. Consider that hope is also a theological or divine virtue, and is no less necessary than faith to our eternal salvation. As by faith we believe in God, so by hope we put our whole trust in Him. Faith builds itself upon God's truth; hope builds itself upon His power, goodness, promises, and mercy. Faith believes all He teaches as coming from the sovereign truth, that cannot deceive nor be deceived; hope looks for all good from Him, as the inexhaustible source of all good, with an assured confidence, that He will not fail on His part of showing mercy, giving grace, and imparting salvation to us, through Jesus Christ, if we fail not on our part, of applying to Him in a proper manner, and fulfilling the conditions He requires of us. This divine virtue produces many excellent fruits; it comforts the soul under the afflictions of this life, it supports her under all her labours, it encourages her to go on with vigour in her mortal pilgrimage, it raises her above this miserable world and all its toys, and fixes her heart in heaven. It is styled by the Apostle (Heb. vi. 19), "the anchor of the soul, sure and firm" (not fastened in the earth, but in heaven), "entering in, even within the veil," to the true sanctuary, where our "high priest Jesus Christ is entered for us," and there fixed in God Himself. O excellent anchor, which keeps our souls ever steady in the midst of all the storms we are liable to in this boisterous sea of the world, and by help of which they are raised up to God!

2. Consider that divine hope keeps the golden mean between the two extremes, of despair on the one hand and presumption on the other, both of them reckoned amongst the sins against the Holy Ghost; because they obstruct in a particular manner all the motions and graces of this Divine Spirit! Despair, by wholly giving up the cause of God and the soul; and presumption, by rashly expecting salvation, without complying with the necessary conditions, or using the means for it. Despair shuts out the Holy Ghost, by wilfully shutting up the gate of prayer, and excluding all other means of grace; and presumption by setting up a way to heaven opposite to His Divine appointments, and in which His grace will have no share. See, my soul, thou fly these

two rocks, both of them infinitely injurious to thy God and destructive of divine hope. Never give thyself up to despondency or despair, seeing thou hast so good a God, so rich in mercies towards all that call upon Him, who has redeemed thee with the precious blood of His own Son, and has promised all good through Him to such as properly apply for it. But then, beware also of the opposite extreme of presuming upon what He has not promised, or expecting to come to Him by walking in a way that leads away from Him.

3. Consider that divine hope, as well as faith, serves very much to arm the soul for her spiritual warfare, and the overthrowing of all her enemies; because by means of this virtue, we are "strengthened in the Lord and the power of His might" (Eph. vi. 10); we exchange our weakness for His almighty strength and power; and having our God with us and for us, we run to the combat with vigour and courage, and fight our way to heaven, in spite not only of flesh and blood, but of all the legions of hell! Yes, my soul, put thy whole trust in God, and thou wilt ever be victorious in all thy conflicts; He never forsakes them that put their whole trust in Him. Divine hope never confoundeth. "It is the helmet of salvation," which protects our head against the enemy, by covering it, as it were, with the Divinity itself, whose divine word and honour is engaged to stand by and defend all such as put their trust in Him.

Conclusion. Ever pray and labour for this divine virtue of hope, the sweet companion of thy pilgrimage and safeguard in all dangers. She will teach thee to keep close to God, and will engage Him to keep close to thee.

TUESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

On joining distrust in ourselves with confidence in God.

1. Consider that in order to succeed in the spiritual warfare, an entire distrust in ourselves must go hand in hand with our confidence in God. For if we build upon our own strength, we build upon a sandy foundation, and our house will certainly fall at the first shock of trial or temptation. The wise man builds his house upon a rock (Matt. vii. 24), and it is proof against all storms and floods; but the foolish man builds his house upon the sand, and when the rains fall, and the floods rise, and the winds blow and beat against that house, it presently falls, and great is the fall thereof. He who entirely trusts in God, and not in himself, is a wise man, and builds upon a rock which can never fail him. But he who puts the least confidence in himself is a foolish man, because he builds upon mere sand, that cannot support the least weight. "Cursed is the man," saith the prophet (Jer. xvii. 5), "that trusteth in

man, and whose heart departeth from the Lord;" which curse falls upon all such as trust in the strength of their own resolutions, or in any power or ability of their own. They drive away from them the grace of God by their pride and presumption.

2. Consider that as God's honour is engaged to stand by them that put their whole trust in Him, and to assist them with His most powerful and effectual graces, so He is, in a manner, obliged to oppose and resist all such sacrilegious wretches, as would rob Him of His glory by ascribing any good to themselves, or expecting any good from themselves, or from their own strength. And are not all they guilty of this sacrilegious presumption, who, in their undertakings or resolutions, build upon themselves, instead of building upon God; or at least divide their confidence between themselves and God, and so would make themselves partners at least in His glory? See, my soul, thou never be guilty of any such extravagance and madness. For what greater madness can there be, than for mere weakness and nothing, a miserable sinful nothing, to presume of itself, and of its own strength! what greater extravagance than for a man to put himself in the place of God, or to attribute to himself what can only be the work of God?

3. Consider that one of the principal reasons why many Christians, who otherwise seem to be men of good-will, make little or no progress in the way of God, and why numbers of others, after repeated confessions, and (as they imagine) strong purposes of renouncing their sinful habits, still return like dogs to the vomit, by relapsing into the same sins, and too often die in them, is because they trust too much to themselves and to their own resolutions, and are not sufficiently divested of self-confidence. Alas! this evil is a mortal poison, which is apt to creep in imperceptibly, to lie lurking in the midst of the soul, and to corrupt its very vitals. It makes it barren with regard to bringing forth any true fruit to God, either in itself or in others; and fruitful in nothing but weeds that are only fit for the fire. My soul, examine well thyself, and see if this unhappy self-confidence has no share in thy enterprise? Are thy resolutions wholly built upon God's grace to be sued for and obtained by humble prayer? Art thou practically and sensibly convinced of thy own nothingness, misery, and sinfulness; and that thou canst not make one step towards God, but inasmuch as He shall help thee? Does no secret opinion of the strength of thy resolutions make thee rashly expose thyself to temptation? Remember thou hast not half the virtue and love of God which St. Peter had, and yet, alas! a secret confidence in his own resolutions betrayed him into that grievous crime of denying his Lord.

Conclusion. So hope for all good from God, as to be ever mistrustful of thyself, and therefore, as the Apostle admonishes, "work out thy salvation with fear and trembling" (Philip. ii. 12).

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

On the Lord's Prayer.

1. Consider that divine hope cannot lie idle in the soul, nor suffer her to be idle, but exercises the soul in prayer, as the great means of obtaining all the good she hopes for. Now all the good we are to hope and pray for, is marked out to us by our Lord, and comprised in very few words, in that excellent prayer which He has taught us, commonly called The Lord's Prayer. Here, in seven short petitions, we pray for all that we are in any way authorised by the word of God to hope for, for ourselves or for our neighbours, for body or soul, for time or eternity. Here we are taught to make acts of all the most necessary virtues, of faith, hope, love of God, conformity to His blessed will, charity for our neighbours, forgiveness of injuries, and repentance for our sins. Here we daily make a spiritual communion, by aspiring after the bread of life. O the excellence of this heavenly prayer; so short in words, that the meanest capacity may easily learn it, and so copious in its contents, that they might fill whole volumes! And what a pity that the generality of Christians should run over this admirable prayer with so little sense of what they are saying, and with dispositions so opposite to the import of those sacred petitions!

2. Consider that in the beginning of this divine prayer, we call God our Father; and are authorised to call Him so by the Son of God Himself. Stand astonished, my soul, at this high favour: what greater dignity can any creature be raised to, than to be called and to be a child of God? to have Him for our Father, who made heaven and earth, and who fills heaven and earth with His infinite majesty? See, my soul, thou never degenerate from this dignity of a child of God, by behaving thyself unworthily of such a Father. See thou never more make thyself a slave to sin, or Satan: O child of heaven, lie no longer grovelling in the mire of the earth. In this prayer we are taught to address ourselves to our Father, who is in heaven, to the end, that we may reflect whither we are to direct our thoughts when we pray, and that we may not suffer any attachment to the things of the earth, to hinder them from freely flying up to heaven. My soul, where are thy thoughts in the time of prayer? Do not irregular affections chain them down to earth, when they ought to be in heaven?

3. Consider what encouragement it ought to be to a Christian, when he goes to his prayers, to remember that he is presenting his petitions to "his Father:" and to such a Father, who has

an incomparable love for His children ; who encourages them to ask, who teaches them in this excellent prayer what they are to ask for ; who has frequently promised to grant them what they ask, provided it be good for them ; and whose power, riches, bounty, and mercy, are all equally infinite. Let this title of our Father, which we give to God in the Lord's prayer, raise our hopes in Him ; let it inflame our hearts with love for so tender a Father ; let it bespeak a reverential awe, a filial fear of offending such a parent, and an earnest desire of being ever a dutiful and obedient child.

Conclusion. Ever esteem and love this divine prayer ; and daily use it with serious attention and suitable devotion.

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

On Hallowed be Thy Name !

1. Consider that the first petition of the Lord's prayer is contained in these words : "Hallowed be Thy name :" that is, may Thy name be ever blessed and praised, honoured and glorified ! This petition claims the first place in the Lord's prayer, as its undoubted right ; because the first and principal duty of a Christian is, to love God with his whole heart and soul, and therefore the first and principal thing he ought to desire and pray for is, the greater honour and glory of God. His love for his God makes him rejoice to think that He is, in Himself, infinitely happy and glorious, and will be so for all eternity, and that He is, and will be eternally adored, praised, and glorified by all the Angels and Saints. But then it grieves him to think how little this infinite goodness is known in this miserable world ; how little this great object of His love is loved here below ; how little He is honoured, praised, and glorified by these very souls of ours, made by Him, and for Him, and which can never be happy, but in the love and enjoyment of Him. And therefore the intent of this petition is to remedy so great an evil ; by earnestly begging of the Sovereign Good, the source of all grace and good, that He would glorify His own most sacred name in us, by effectually teaching us to love, serve, and glorify Him.

2. Consider that this petition contains an act of divine love, even of perfect charity and benevolence, inasmuch as it expresses the longing desire of the soul for the greater honour, praise, and glory of her maker, as the only good she can wish, or procure to His infinite Majesty. It contains also an act of the most perfect charity towards herself ; because, in praying that God's name may be glorified in all, and by all, she desires, in the first place, that it may be glorified in herself, and by herself : now what greater good can she wish, or procure for herself, than that God

may be ever glorified in her, and by her, and that her whole being may be consecrated to His glory, for time and eternity! And as the most perfect act of charity towards our neighbour, is that by which we labour to procure his greatest good, and the like good as we desire for ourselves; whilst by this petition, we dedicate our whole selves to the divine glory; we do as much for our neighbour also, by praying that God's name may be sanctified in and by all, both now and for ever. And this love we here exercise, both with regard to ourselves and our neighbour, is pure and perfect charity: because God is both the beginning and the end of it; inasmuch as we love both ourselves and our neighbour, with relation to the greater glory of God. Thus divine charity in all its branches is exercised in this first petition.

3. Consider that in praying for the hallowing or sanctifying of the name of God, we pray, in effect, for the sanctification of the whole world; that the knowledge of the true and living God, and of His Son Jesus Christ, may be spread over all the earth; that all nations may serve Him, all tongues may praise Him, and all hearts may love Him; in a word, that all men upon earth may be Saints, and may be all happily united in proclaiming the glory of God's name, not merely by their words, but much more by their lives; for this is the most perfect way of sanctifying the name of God. See, then, my soul, the vast extent of this petition, by which we pray for all glory to God: and for all good to man, both for here and hereafter, and let thy heart go along with thy tongue, as often as thou repeatest it.

Conclusion. Let this earnest desire of the greater glory of God in all things, be ever the predominant passion of thy heart, and He will glorify thee for all eternity.

FRIDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

Thy Kingdom come!

1. Consider that in this second petition, we pray for the kingdom of God. Now we find in holy writ, that the kingdom of God is understood in three different ways. First, of the eternal kingdom of God in heaven. Secondly, of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, in His Church upon earth. Thirdly, of the mystical kingdom of God, in our souls, according to that of our Saviour (Luke xvii. 21), "The kingdom of God is within you." And in this petition, "Thy kingdom come," we pray for the kingdom of God, according to all these three acceptations of His kingdom. See, my soul, how ample and extensive this petition is, and how noble and sublime those things are, which thou art here taught to petition for. Stand astonished that a poor worm of the earth, drawn from nothing, and, what is infinitely more humbling, taken

up from the dunghill of sin and corruption, should be authorised to aspire after a kingdom, even an eternal kingdom; to live and reign for endless ages with the living God. Yet this we are here taught to pray for, with the assurance of being heard, if we pray as we ought, from Him who has the disposing of this kingdom. And this is one part of the import of this petition, and contains an act of divine hope.

2. Consider that as the kingdom of God is often taken in the Scriptures to signify that spiritual kingdom which Christ came to establish upon earth; and His reign in His Church, in which He is both King and Priest for ever; so, in this petition, we are also to have an eye upon the propagation and exaltation of this kingdom of Christ; by earnestly begging that the reign of Satan and of sin may have an end; that all infidels may be enlightened by the light of the gospel; that all heresies, schisms, errors, and abuses may be rooted out; that all vices and scandals may be abolished among Christians, and that divine faith, hope, and charity, with all other virtues, may reign both in all the pastors of God's Church, and in all the people of God. So that here is also exercised an act of perfect love, both in relation to God, by desiring that His kingdom, His grace, and His truth, may be victorious over all the world; and in relation to all mankind, by praying that all men may be subdued to that happy kingdom, and may be true and faithful subjects of this great King.

3. Consider that, as true charity should begin at home, we are particularly to have in view in this petition, the establishment of the kingdom of God in our own souls, by heartily desiring, and earnestly praying, that God may come to us, and take full possession of our souls, by His grace; that He may set up His throne within us, and reign without a rival in our hearts; that He may suppress all rebellions there, subdue all our passions, and make our whole interior His own, by giving us a strong and perfect love for Him. O blessed kingdom of divine love! When wilt thou come to me? When shalt thou be established in my soul? When shall thy sacred flames consume in me all that is in any way displeasing to my God, or that dares to rebel against Him?

Conclusion. Make it thy business to seek, in the first place, the kingdom of God, by procuring His justice in thy soul; and, as He has promised, nothing else shall be wanting to thee. God must first be king in thy soul here, if thou ever hope to arrive at His eternal kingdom hereafter.

SATURDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

Thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven.

1. Consider that in this third petition, the soul embraces with all her heart, the holy Will of God, earnestly desiring and praying that both she herself, and every soul upon earth, may ever be, both a faithful servant and true lover of the Divine Will, even as the Saints and Angels in Heaven, who are so absorbed in the love of God, that they have no other will but the will of God. So that this petition, like the two former, contains an act of divine love. A love of benevolence to God, inasmuch as the soul here desires to give all to God, and to bring both her own will and all other wills to Him ; that all may embrace, bow down, and adore, love, serve, and obey the sacred will of God and conform to it in all things. And a love of the most perfect charity to ourselves and to our neighbour in desiring and procuring for ourselves and them so great a good, as is this perfect conformity to the will of God, and that God's holy will may be ever done, both in us and by us.

2. Consider how just it is that we should ever adhere to the holy will of God, and pray with all our hearts, that His holy will may be done in all things. The will of God is always good, is always wise, is always right and equitable, is always beautiful, and therefore we ought always to embrace and love it. He perfectly knows what is best in itself, and for us ; and if we leave ourselves in His hands, He will certainly order all things for the best, and therefore it is our wisest way, if we love ourselves, to give ourselves up to His holy will. The will of God is all-powerful, and must prevail ; and therefore it is madness to set ourselves against His almighty will ; it serves for nothing but to make us miserable. The will of God, in effect, is God Himself, and therefore we must ever submit to and obey it ; we must always bow down and adore that sacred will.

3. Consider that the will of God ought to be the Christian's rule in all things. In all our deliberations, whether with regard to temporals or spirituals, we ought first to consult the holy will of God, crying out to Him with the convert, St. Paul (Acts ix. 6), "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?" And this with a sincere desire to know, and a perfect readiness of mind to follow His will, whichever way He is pleased to order or direct ; not seeking that His will should bend to ours, but that ours may ever conform to His. And as, in all our doings, we must, to the best of our knowledge and power, follow the will of God ; so, in all our sufferings, we must resign and submit ourselves to His blessed will, assuring ourselves, that nothing happens to us in this kind

but by the appointment of Heaven, and that all comes from the hand of Him who knows what is best, because He is infinitely wise; and sends what is for the best, because He is infinitely good in Himself and good to us.

Conclusion. Ever recite this third petition of the Lord's prayer, with these dispositions of the love of God and of a perfect conformity in all things to His holy will. We read of a servant of God (Gregory Lopez) who for some years, at every breath, repeated this petition, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!" O that we could always be in the like happy sentiments!

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Give us this Day our daily Bread.

1. Consider that after seeking in the three first petitions, the greater glory of the name of God, the propagation of His kingdom, and the execution of His will both in heaven and in earth; we are taught in the fourth petition to pray for all necessaries for ourselves, both for soul and body, under the name of our daily bread, which we here beg for this short day of our mortal life, in order to support us in our pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world, till we come to our true country and to the happy day of everlasting light and life, in the heavenly kingdom of our Father. As to the things of this world we pray for them with more indifference, as for things of lesser consequence; and which, if we seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, our Father has promised to furnish us with, so far as He shall see expedient for us; and we pray for them for to-day, being forbidden to be solicitous for to-morrow. But what we are more earnestly to pray for, is the bread which is to support the spiritual life of our souls; the grace of God, the word of God, and the holy sacraments. And this we beg both for ourselves and for all the world, from the great Pastor of souls.

2. Consider that the holy Fathers expound this petition as meant in particular, of the bread of life, which we receive in the blessed Eucharist, for the food, nourishment, strength, and life of our souls. This bread is the sacred body, and blood, of Jesus Christ the Son of God; who calls Himself the "living bread which came down from Heaven" (John vi. 51), and assures us, that he "that eateth of this bread shall live for ever:" and that "the bread which He will give, is His flesh for the life of the world" (v. 52). This is here styled our daily bread, because given us for this our day of life, and given to be our daily support, by partaking of it, either really or spiritually, every day. Oh! my soul, ever aspire after this heavenly bread, the

source of all grace and true life. Admire and adore the incomprehensible ways, by which thy God seeks to communicate Himself to thee; and see thou correspond with His goodness and love, by turning daily to Him, and giving thy whole self to Him.

3. Consider that the best way to answer the principal intent of this petition, is by making a spiritual communion (as often as we repeat these words, give us this day our daily bread), by a lively faith and hope in Jesus Christ, the true bread of life; by aspiring after Him, by love and desire, and by inviting Him to come and take full possession of our souls, and to unite them to Himself for time and eternity. Happy those souls that frequently in the day communicate in this manner!

Conclusion. Pray for thy daily bread in such a manner as to have ever principally in view this bread of life, and labour to partake of it daily, at least, by a spiritual communion.

MONDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

Forgive us our Trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.

1. Consider that in this fifth petition our Lord has furnished us with a daily remedy for those many evils into which we daily fall. "We all offend in many things" (Jas. iii. 2), and not a day passes in which we are not contracting fresh debts to our great Master, either by omission or commission, in thought, word, or deed. Therefore we ought daily to sue for a discharge, and to call for mercy and forgiveness with a truly penitent heart; and this is the design of this petition of the Lord's Prayer, which when recited with fervour, readily obtains the remission of those daily debts, and reinstates us in the good graces of our Master. These lesser faults into which we daily fall, if neglected, and suffered to grow and multiply, are of worse consequence to our souls than we can well imagine; the water that comes into the ship by small chinks, if not daily pumped out, may in time increase in such manner as to sink the vessel. That the like may never happen to our souls, we must be daily repenting for these daily sins, and offering up for them the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart, as often as we repeat this petition of the Lord's Prayer.

2. Consider that besides the obligation of labouring to procure the discharge of these daily debts, we must see if we have not reason to apprehend a more heavy load of debt lying upon our souls, on account of our past sins; more especially if in any part of our lives we have lived in mortal sin. Alas! the load of such debts as these is immense, a sum of ten thousand talents, which we are utterly unable to discharge of ourselves; and whether our repentance has been sufficient to apply to our souls the discharge

purchased by the blood of Christ, we cannot tell. And therefore our best security is to be always repenting for our past sins, and to beg daily of God to forgive us all the sins of our youth and our ignorance, to cleanse us from our hidden sins, and to be merciful to us, with regard to the sins we may have any way occasioned in others. And with this penitential spirit for our past sins, known or unknown, we ought to recite this petition of the Lord's Prayer; and with it daily present ourselves like Magdalene, at the feet of our Redeemer, imploring His mercy, both for ourselves and for all poor sinners.

3. Consider that in this petition we beg of God to "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," which words were added by our Lord to put us in mind that we must not look for forgiveness from God of the offences we commit against Him, if we do not forgive from our hearts the offences which our neighbours commit against us. See, Christians, how much our Lord takes to heart our forgiving one another and loving our very enemies; since, not content with frequently inculcating this duty on other occasions, He was pleased to insert it in the very prayer He would have us daily to say, to the end we might never forget it. Let us then examine well our dispositions in this regard, and lay aside all rancour and animosity against our neighbours when we go to sue for mercy from God; otherwise we shall never obtain the mercy we ask.

Conclusion. Take occasion, from this petition of the Lord's Prayer, to practise daily these three lessons: first, of a hearty repentance for thy daily sins; 2dly, of daily renewing thy sorrow and contrition for thy past offences; and lastly, of daily exercising charity and mercy in forgiving from thy heart all who have offended thee.

TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

Lead us not into Temptation.

1. Consider that after begging of our Lord, in the foregoing petition, the forgiveness of the sins we have already committed, we here beg of Him to preserve us from relapsing into any of our former offences, or of being any more guilty of wilful sin. The true penitent abhors the monster sin beyond all other evils whatsoever; and therefore he is not content with seeking the remission of his offences, but is ever solicitous to avoid the like evils for the time to come. Therefore he flies the occasions of them, seeks to keep out of dangerous temptations, and being sensible of his own weakness, is earnest in prayer to beg of God to stand by him, and to help him to overcome all the enemies of his soul, and rather to let him die a thousand deaths than to commit one wilful

sin. And this is the principal meaning of this petition, "Lead us not into temptation," which ought to be recited by all Christians, with the dispositions of great horror of sin, and a most earnest desire to be ever preserved from it.

2. Consider in what sense we here beg of God "not to lead us into temptation;" since as St. James says (chap. i. 13), "God is not a tempter of evils, and He tempteth no man," so as to incite, allure, or provoke to sin. No, certainly; such temptations as these cannot be from God, who is essentially good, and ever abhors sin; but they are from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Yet these have never power to tempt us but with God's permission, nor strength to overcome us but when we neglect to apply in a proper manner to God for His grace. Hence we make use of this expression, to signify our total dependence on God, and to beg that He would not give the enemy any power over us, nor suffer us to give ourselves up to Him. Moreover, as those trials, which God often sends for the exercise of our virtue, and for the proof of our fidelity, are also in Scripture called temptations; such as afflictions, crosses or pains, of which God is certainly the author and distributor; we beg of Him, by these words, Lead us not into temptation, that with relation to all such trials as these, He would ever have regard to our weakness, and never lay upon us any load above our strength.

3. Consider with regard to temptations, that they are not sins if we give no way to them, nor bring them upon us by our own fault. So far from it, that they are often the occasion of very great good to our souls; by obliging us to watch and pray the more, from the sense of our danger; by keeping us humble, and by affording us the opportunity of gaining as many victories, and consequently as many glorious crowns for all eternity, as we have had conflicts with the enemy by occasion of temptations. Wherefore it is not the meaning of this petition, to pray that we may never have any temptation (for this might not be expedient for us), but that we may never yield to temptation. But as for seeking or desiring temptation, it would be too great a rashness for weak souls; and more especially with regard to temptations against purity, it would be a crime to affect them, or, without necessity, expose oneself to them. Christians, let us learn to arm ourselves for this warfare with the armour of the fear of God, and a lively faith; let us stand upon our guard by watching and praying; let us readily and heartily resist the first attacks of the enemy; let us bear with patience and humility the labour and trouble of the conflict; but ever reject with horror the criminal satisfaction proposed by the enemy.

Conclusion. Observe these rules with regard to temptations; to join always an humble distrust in thyself with a firm confidence in God; and ever to have recourse to Him in all thy

conflicts by humble and fervent prayer ; and thou shalt always come off with victory.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

Deliver us from Evil.

1. Consider that this petition is near akin to the two foregoing petitions ; inasmuch as the main drift of the former of them was to deliver us from the evil of our past sins, and of the latter to keep us from the evil of sin for the time to come : and this, in general, begs to be delivered from all evil—past, present, or to come. Now, of all these evils, sin is not only the greatest, but is, in some sense, the only thing that deserves to be called evil ; because all other things that we call evils are either the consequence of sin, or cease to be real evils, when not accompanied with sin. So that the main business of this petition is to beg of God that He would deliver us from all sin, past, present, or to come ; from all the consequences of sin and the punishment which our sins have deserved, from the slavery of our passions and sinful habits, and from the tyranny and possession of the Evil one, who has dominion over all wilful sinners. Good God, for thy mercy's sake, and through the precious blood of Thy Son our Redeemer, deliver us from all these dreadful evils !

2. Consider, by descending into particulars, all the scenes of numberless evil to which we are liable, on account of sin, in this miserable world ; and from which we here pray to be delivered by the mercy of God ; such as public calamities, wars, plagues, famines, earthquakes, tempests, inundations, besides a multitude of evils, to which each particular person is frequently exposed. Then all spiritual evils, which are much more deplorable, whether public or private ; heresies, schisms, persecutions of the church, errors, abuses, oppressions of the poor, sacrileges, scandals, national vices, and the general reign of Satan and sin in the thoughts, words, and actions of the children of this world. And with regard to the future, the dreadful evil of unprovided death, and final impenitence ; the dismal sufferings of another world ; the judgment and sentence of eternal damnation ; and the second death of a miserable eternity. And do not so many and such lamentable evils well deserve that we should continually pray that God in His mercy would deliver us all from having any share in them ?

3. Consider as to thyself in particular, how many and how great evils thou hast reason to apprehend, to be either actually upon thee, or to threaten thee on every side. Reflect on the multitude of thy past and present sins, infinitely more numerous, and more enormous than thou imaginest ; the uncertainty, the

weakness, and inconstancy of thy repentance ; the dreadful debt of punishment due to thy sins, and how little thou hast done towards the discharge of it ; the vices and passions thou art daily subject to ; the many enemies that daily encompass thee, and are continually laying snares for thy soul ; the corruption of thy own heart, the blindness of thy understanding, thy weakness in all that is good, and the violence of thy concupiscence, and inclination to evil. Then see what thou hast to apprehend of evil for the future from the judgments of God ever hanging over the head of impenitent sinners, from the malice and subtilty of thy enemies, ever intent upon thy ruin ; and the hold thou givest them by thy passions, and that unhappy self-love which keeps a continual correspondence with them ; lastly, from that miserable death, judgment, and hell, which are the portion of all who, by occasion of mortal sin unrepented of, fall into the hands of the living God, and thou wilt be convinced of the necessity of continually crying out to thy holy Redeemer : Deliver us from all evil. Amen.

Conclusion. Embrace humble and fervent prayer, as the sovereign means of being delivered from all evils, past, present, or to come : and as these evils continually threaten thee, so let thy prayer also be in some measure continual.

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

On Morning Prayer.

1. Consider that every servant of God ought to begin the day with the worship of God, and to give his heart, as the wise man says (Eccles. xxxix. 6), to resort early to the Lord who made him, and to pour forth his prayer in the sight of the Most High. The manna of heaven melted away, and was lost, if the people of God did not get up before the sun to gather it : "that it might be known to all men," says Solomon (Wisdom xvi. 28), "that we must prevent the sun to bless God, and worship Him at the dawning of the light." "O God, my God," says the royal prophet (Ps. lxii.), "to thee do I watch at the break of day." My soul, see thou never neglect this morning worship of thy God. Let not the devil run away with thy first thoughts, but give them to God by a pure and perfect offering of thy whole self to His love and service, for that day, and for all eternity ; and whilst thou art rising and dressing, keep thyself in His company and speak to Him.

2. Consider what are the particular acts of virtue and religion that ought to be the ingredients of thy morning prayer, viz. (1.) An act of adoration towards the infinite majesty of God and of homage to Him, by bowing down both body and soul to worship Him with all thy powers, as thy first beginning and thy last end ;

and to acknowledge His absolute sovereignty and thy total dependence on Him. (2.) An act of thanksgiving for all His benefits in general, and in particular to thee and to all the world, for creation, preservation, redemption, vocation to the true faith, as also for His eternal love, and, in consequence of this love, His bringing thee to the beginning of a new day, in order to help thee forward to the happy day of eternity. (3.) An act of contrition for all thy past ingratitude, and for all thy sins, with a sincere resolution of renouncing them for the future. (4.) An offering of all thy thoughts, words, and actions, of the day, to the honour and glory of God; and of thy whole soul to be employed in loving and serving Him. (5.) An humble and fervent supplication, to beg the grace of God and His blessing for thyself and for the whole Church that He would keep all from sin, and teach all effectually to love and serve Him for ever. (6.) Conclude always with acts of faith, hope, and charity, and recommend thyself to the prayers and protection of the Blessed Virgin, of thy good angel, and of all the angels and glorified saints.

3. Consider that thou must also remember, in thy morning exercise, to declare war against thy customary failings and sins, but more especially against thy predominant passion, which is the most dangerous of all thy enemies. This is that daily warfare in which all, of necessity, must be engaged, who have a mind to save their souls. We must fight continually against our vices and passions, or they will carry us to hell. Now this it is that obliges us to renew every morning our good resolutions, yet without trusting at all in ourselves; and to arm and prepare ourselves beforehand for these conflicts, by forecasting the occasions and temptations we are likely to meet with in the day; and by concluding upon the measures proper to be taken, in order to overcome them, either by flight or fight, but principally by fervent prayer to our Lord, to help us in the combat and to grant us the victory.

Conclusion. Be ever diligent in this morning exercise. A good beginning of the day is a great matter. He will have the whole day to whom thou givest the beginning of it.

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

On Evening Prayer.

1. Consider that as God is our first beginning, forasmuch as we are made by Him; so is He also our last end, because we are made for Him; and therefore, as we ought to begin the day with Him, by morning prayer, so we ought to end the day in His company, by evening prayer. Morning and evening prayer are like the two daily meals of the soul, that ought not upon any account to be

omitted, lest she languish and grow sick for want of her daily food; and if upon any occasion we are hindered from these meals, at their usual times, we ought to observe what we practise with regard to our bodily meals; that is, we must take them at the first opportunity. Moreover, as we make it our care that our families, and such as are under our charge, want not their daily corporal sustenance, so ought we much more to make it our care that their souls may not starve for want of assembling them to prayer, or seeing that they are regular in this daily exercise.

2. Consider that one of the principal parts of the evening exercise is the examination of conscience, which may be made in this manner: (1.) Place thyself in the presence of God, bow thyself down, and adore Him, and give Him thanks for all He has done that day for thee, and for the whole world. (2.) Earnestly beg His light and grace, that thou mayest discover all thy sins, and be heartily sorry for them. (3.) Endeavour to call to mind how thou hast spent the day, from morning till night, what care thou hast taken to discharge thyself well, both of the common duties of a Christian, and of the particular duties of thy station or calling, and especially how thou hast behaved thyself with regard to thy customary failings, and thy predominant passion. (4.) Endeavour to be heartily sorry for all the sins of the day, and for the sins of thy whole life, known or unknown; go in spirit to the feet of Christ, make an humble confession of them to Him, and implore His mercy. (5.) Resolve upon a serious and thorough amendment for the future, determine to begin from that very hour a new life, and think upon the means of accomplishing it. Happy are the souls that labour in this manner every night to wash away their sins with penitential tears, and never venture to lie down to rest under the guilt of sin! unhappy they who, for want of this precaution, expose themselves every night to the evident danger of dying in their sins, and even finding themselves in hell before morning.

3. Consider that in order to end the day well, we ought every night to endeavour to put ourselves, as much as possible, in the condition in which we should be glad to be found at the hour of our death. And therefore, besides offering up to God, every night, the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart for all the sins of our life, the Christian should also think seriously of his last end, and dispose himself for it by acts of a lively faith, and of an entire confidence in his Redeemer, by a perfect oblation and resignation of himself to the holy will of God, and by aspiring to an eternal union with Him, and in the meantime hiding himself with great affection in the sacred wounds of Jesus Christ, and there composing himself to rest. See, my soul, thou never forget this practice.

Conclusion. Never neglect any part of this evening exercise,

and see that it be not neglected by any under thy care. A religious performance of this duty will be a great means to secure to thy soul a happy death.

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

On Praying always.

1. Consider that we are not only to address ourselves to God by prayer, in the morning and in the evening; but we are also called upon in the Word of God "to pray always" (Luke xviii. 1), to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. v. 17), and to "seek the face of the Lord evermore" (Ps. civ. 4). The soul that truly loves God will never bear to stay all the day long without often thinking of Him, and speaking to Him, seeing He has both His eye and His heart always upon her. Love ever seeks the company and conversation of its beloved; now it is by means of prayer that we are introduced into the company and conversation of our great Lover, and we quickly lose both His love and Him, if we pass whole days in forgetfulness of Him. Besides, other dangers threaten us, when we do not keep close to God by continual prayer. So that if we love either God or ourselves, we must frequently in the day have recourse to prayer. It is the very breath and life of the soul, and therefore to confine it to morning, or evening only, is to expose the soul to the danger of perishing.

2. Consider that the practice of continual prayer does not require that we should be always upon our knees, nor yet that we should always have a prayer-book in our hands, or be always reciting a form of prayer; nor does it in any way break in upon our other employments, so as to be a hindrance to them, no not even to our common conversation, or recreation; but it only consists in a certain sense and conviction of the presence of God, and frequent conversions of the soul to Him. Thus, for example, in the beginning of every action, the soul should turn to God, who is always near, and in the very midst of her, by offering up to His honour and glory what she is going to do, and, at the same time, offering her whole self to Him. In the midst of all her actions, and conversations, she should frequently tend to Him, by aspirations or breathings of love, and call Him to her assistance by short ejaculatory prayers. This way of proceeding will sanctify all her common actions, and make them partake both of the nature and benefit of prayer.

3. Consider how diligent the ancient Patriarchs were in this exercise of praying always: since the Scripture says, "they walked with God, and in His sight:" which implies their ever thinking of Him, and having a constant intention to please Him.

The like was the practice of the Fathers of the desert, and of so many other Saints, who even whilst their hands were at work, took care to have their hearts with God. Christians, let us imitate these servants of God, and since no time, nor place, nor company, nor occupation can exclude the divine immensity which fills heaven and earth, nor hinder God from being so near to us, that our very souls are not more present to our bodies which they animate, than God is to the very centre of our souls; let no time, nor place, nor company, nor occupation, divert us from often thinking of Him, and often speaking to Him, in our hearts. No conversation can be so honourable, so profitable, or so agreeable, as this which we hold in the interior of our souls with our Sovereign God.

Conclusion. Aim with all thy power at this inward conversation with God, in the midst of thy external occupations. In order to this, keep thy mind pure from impertinent amusements and roving imaginations, and thy heart from all disorderly ties and affections to creatures; and God will fill both thy mind and thy heart, and will effectually teach thee to pray always.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

On the Great Commandment of Divine Love.

1. Consider those words of the divine law (Mark xii. 30), "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength. This (says the Lord) is the greatest and the first commandment" (Matt. xxii. 39). Yes, my soul, it is the greatest of all the commandments of God, in His divine eyes, and that which He takes most to heart, since He has made our souls to His own image and likeness, to this very end that we should love Him and should dedicate our whole being to Him all the time of our pilgrimage here upon earth, and so come to be happily united to Him in an eternal bond of love in His heavenly kingdom. Oh, the excellent dignity of this divine commandment, which tends directly and immediately to raise our souls above this earth, above the heaven of heavens, and the whole created universe, and to bring them to God who made heaven and earth, and to unite them to Him by perfect love both for time and eternity.

2. Consider the incomprehensible goodness of God manifested to us in this commandment, in His insisting so much upon our loving Him, and tending with all our power to union with Him. Is then our love of any consequence to Him? Or can we add anything to His happiness by loving Him? Or will He lose anything if we refuse Him our love? And what is there in us, if compared to His infinite Majesty, that He should concern

Himself whether we love Him or no? Would it not be an unspeakable favour to us that He should even suffer us, considering who He is, and what we are, to aspire to His love? But that this great God should make it a commandment, and the very first and principal of all His commandments, that we should love Him, and love Him with our whole heart, that He should insist upon our entering into this league of eternal friendship with Him, promising all happiness for eternity upon our compliance, and threatening us with most dreadful and eternal evils if we love Him not,—this shows forth and sets in so wonderful a light the goodness of God and His love for us, that we should be not only most wretched, insensible, and ungrateful beyond expression, but even in some sense worse than devils, should we refuse Him our love.

3. Consider the excellence of this commandment of divine love with regard to the fruits it brings to our souls. Divine love is the queen of virtues; she never comes alone, but brings all other virtues along with her; she gives life to them all: even faith and hope are dead when she is not in their company. She brings with her the remission of all our sins; she makes us the friends and favourites of the Most High; she makes us His children, His spouses, His temples; she is the "bond of all perfection." O my soul, how glorious it is, how happy, how delightful, to be thus united to thy God by a strict bond of friendship and love! Embrace, then, with all thy powers, this great commandment, which, by obliging thee to give thy whole self to the love of God, brings down thy God with all His treasures to thee!

Conclusion. Make it henceforward the business of thy life to learn this great lesson of loving God; and as no one but God Himself can effectually teach thee so sublime and so divine a science, continually beg of Him to introduce thee into His school, and there be thy Master.

MONDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

On loving the Lord our God above all things.

1. Consider the import of these words—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God!" and thou shalt find in them innumerable motives to dedicate thyself to divine love. For who is this thou art here commanded to love? THE LORD, that is, the Eternal, self-existent, incomprehensible, and infinite Being of beings, who alone properly is, and who is being itself. For all this is implied in that ineffable name, which is here rendered THE LORD. "I am, who am," saith He (Exod. iii. 14). And, "He who is hath sent me to you"—THE LORD, that is, the Creator, and absolute Master of the whole universe, of all things visible and invisible;

infinitely powerful, infinitely wise, infinitely good, infinitely beautiful: the one true sovereign good, infinite in all perfections, goodness, beauty, perfection, and truth itself, compared with whom all things else are a mere nothing. See, my soul, how many motives thou hast to love this great Lord, who comprises in Himself all that is lovely and charming, who is the immense ocean of all good.

2. Consider the motives of divine love implied in those words, "thy God;" forasmuch as they signify that this Lord of infinite majesty is also pleased to be thine. Yes, He is thy God; He is thy first beginning, and thy last end; He is thy Maker, who has made thee for Himself, and who many ways daily communicates Himself to thee; He is thy Father, thy spouse, thy pastor, thy keeper, thy constant benefactor, thy ever-faithful friend, thy most disinterested lover, thy sovereign good, and the source of all thy good, for time and eternity. And whereas thou wast fallen from Him and from His love by sin, He has been pleased to give Himself to thee, in a manner still more endearing, by sending His own Son to be thy Saviour and Redeemer. Reflect, my soul, on what the Son of God has done and suffered for love of thee. From the first moment of His conception thou wast always in His heart. His love for thee brought Him down from His heavenly throne, to take flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin; His love for thee made Him offer Himself upon the altar of the Cross, a sacrifice for thy sins; His love for thee made Him bequeath thee His body and blood in an admirable sacrament, to unite thee to Himself for eternity. And shall not all this oblige thee to love Him, and to love Him with thy whole heart?

3. Consider that this love which we owe to our God, both as infinitely good in Himself, and as infinitely good to us, must be a love of preference; that is, we must love Him above all things whatsoever. For he who loves his worldly honour, his interest, his pleasure, his own will, the gratifying his humours and passions, or the pleasing of any person, how near or dear soever, more than his God, is not worthy of Him; but is guilty of high treason against Him, and of a kind of idolatry, in preferring the creature before the Creator, who is blessed for evermore. And not only he that prefers any creature before God, but he that even offers to put himself, his own life, his dearest affections, or any other thing created, or even the whole creation in balance with his God, so as to love them as much as God, is in like manner unworthy of God, and offers Him the greatest outrage imaginable; because the whole universe compared with God is a mere nothing, and therefore cannot without intolerable injury be put in balance with Him. What must I then think of myself, when I have so often preferred empty toys, mere vanities, and lying follies before the living God?

Conclusion. Henceforward at least love the Lord thy God

above all things, and nothing else with Him but what thou lovest for his sake, and with relation to Him. Cry out with St. Michael, Quis ut Deus? Who is like to God? And who but He deserves our heart?

TUESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

On loving God with our whole Heart.

1. Consider that the first sacrifice which divine love calls for, by this great commandment, is that of our heart. My son, "give me thy heart," says the Wisdom of God (Prov. xxiii. 26). This sacrifice must be of the whole heart, and in the nature of a holocaust, that is, of a sacrifice, in which the whole victim is given to God, without reserve, being first slain, then laid upon the altar, and there consumed with fire; even with that fire which originally came from heaven (Lev. ix. 24), and which was commanded to be kept always burning upon God's altar. Wherefore, in this mystical sacrifice of love, this heart of ours, in order to be made a holocaust, should also first be slain, that is, should die to itself, and to all disorderly affections, by mortification and self-denial; and so be laid on God's altar, to be wholly dedicated and consecrated to Him; and to evaporate, as it were, to Him, in the flames of divine love; which is the true fire that comes down from heaven, to carry us up thither, and which ought always to be kept burning in the mystical temple of God in our souls.

2. Consider how just, how reasonable, how necessary it is, that we should love God with our whole heart, so as to give no part of it away from Him, since it belongs wholly to Him by all manner of titles. He made our heart for Himself, to be the eternal seat and the living temple of His love, and He has given it a certain appetite after Him, together with an immense capacity of love, which nothing less than God can fill, or satisfy. He has shed His own most precious blood, to purchase our heart, to cleanse it for Himself, and to fill it with His love. It has been solemnly dedicated, sanctified, and consecrated to Him at our baptism. He has sent His divine Spirit to take possession of it, to make it His kingdom, and to establish His throne in it. It must be then a most crying injustice, if we offer to alienate any part of our heart from Him, who claims it all upon so many titles. Christians! let us give Him what is His without reserve; let us divert no part of this small heart of ours away from the immense Lord of heaven and earth; it would be a sacrilege to attempt it.

3. Consider that the love of God will not admit of a divided heart; He will not suffer a rival in His kingdom, a partner in His throne, or an idol in His temple. Our God is a jealous God,

and therefore, if we follow any other lovers, we lose His love, and drive Him away from us. Alas! my soul, who is this that thou wouldst associate with God in thy heart? Is it thy worldly pride, thy carnal affections, thy sensual inclinations? Assure thyself, this love cannot endure such company. Or is it some favourite creature which thou art unwilling to dislodge from the place it has occupied in thy heart? Be sure thou must part either with the creature or the Creator. He loves God too little who loves anything else with Him, which he does not love in Him, for His sake, and with subordination to the love of Him.

Conclusion. Love thy friend in God, and thy enemy for God's sake, and all such things as thou mayest lawfully love, according to the measure and rule prescribed by divine love; and thus no love of the creature will take off any part of thy heart from the love of the Creator. Thus thou shalt love Him with thy whole heart.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

On loving God with our whole Soul.

1. Consider that we are not only to love God with our whole heart, that is, with our whole affection; but also with our whole soul; that is, by applying and employing all the powers of our soul in His divine love and service, because He made these souls of ours after His own image, and likewise for this very end, that they might be wholly dedicated to His love, and might turn all their powers and faculties towards Him, to serve and glorify Him for ever. Bring then, my soul, all thy powers to thy God, and oblige them to bow down to this divine law of love, and ardently to embrace its happy service, which will ennoble and perfect them all. Let thy understanding be ever directed by its bright light into the ways of truth! The light of divine love will expel the dark mists raised by thy passions and self-love, which so often over-cloud thee and make thee go astray. Let thy memory be ever recollected by divine love. Let all thy words and actions, let all thy desires, be ever guided and actuated by this heavenly charity. O blessed kingdom of divine love, when wilt thou come to me and take full possession of my whole soul?

2. Consider that as the will is the ruling power of the soul, which is the proper seat of love; so it is the will, amongst all the powers of the soul, that ought in a special manner to be dedicated and consecrated to divine love. The will ever has good for the object of love; so as not to be able to love or embrace anything but under the form or appearance at least of good. Now, God

alone is the true and sovereign good, and He alone can satisfy the inbred appetite she has for good. In the love of Him alone she finds herself happy: all other loves do but impose upon her, and deceive her with empty appearances. Therefore, for His sake, and because He is infinitely good in Himself, as well as for her own sake, and because He is her only true and sovereign good, she ought to give her whole self up to His heavenly love. How happy is that will that is thus dedicated to the love of God! How happy is that will that is the eternal servant of divine love, and makes a constant sacrifice of her whole liberty and property to the all-wise, all-powerful, and ever-loving will of God!

3. Consider how the great pattern of divine love, Jesus Christ our Saviour, began the work of our redemption by devoting His whole will without reserve, and with all the ardour of His soul, to do and to love the blessed will of His Father. Hear how He expresses Himself (Ps. xxxix. 8, 9), "Then said I; Behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of Me that I should do Thy will; O My God, I have desired it, and Thy law in the midst of My heart." This will of His Father was, during His whole life, the continual object of His love, the subject of His thoughts, the motive of His words and actions; He loved it so that it was His very food; He laid down His life for the love of it. And didst not thou also, my soul, come into the world to love and to do the will of God? Is not thy will given thee for this end? Hast thou any other business here? Is it not also written of thee in the book of life, that thou shouldst do the will of God? And canst thou say with thy Saviour, "O my God, it is what I have willed, and my desire, in the midst of my heart!" Take heed, lest if thy will fall from this love of the will of God, and of His holy law, thy name be blotted out of the book of life, which in effect is the same as the book of love.

Conclusion. Dedicate thy whole soul, with all its powers, to the love of God; and especially make over thy will to Him without reserve. This is a devotion the most solid and secure; the most agreeable to God, and the most advantageous to thyself.

THURSDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

On loving God with our whole Mind.

1. Consider that our whole mind ought also to be consecrated to divine love, according to the import of that greatest and first commandment of our heavenly Lover. Now the mind is the seat of thought, and consequently of consideration, meditation, and recollection in God. Wherefore to love God with our whole mind is to have our thoughts ever turned towards Him; to consider Him; to meditate daily upon Him and His truth, and upon all that relates to Him, or helps to bring the soul to Him; to

walk always in His presence by keeping ourselves recollected in Him. This love of the whole mind was required of all the servants of God, even in the old law, and much more in the new, which is the law of love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," said He (Deut. vi.); "and these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping, rising; and thou shalt bind them as a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be, and shall move between thy eyes, and thou shalt write them on the doors of thy house." See, my soul, how strongly thy God inculcates the perpetual remembrance of Him and of His divine law; but more especially of the great commandment of love, which is the fulfilling of the law. See how He expects that thy whole mind should be ever full of Him.

2. Consider how reasonable and just it is that we should love God with our whole mind, by ever remembering and thinking of Him. He always remembers and thinks of us. His eye is always upon us; from all eternity we have had a place in His mind, in which He has cherished us with infinite love; and shall we refuse Him the place He calls for in our mind, or put Him off with anything less than our whole mind? Alas! what worthless things are we! How unworthy that this great God should give us any place in His thoughts or concern Himself at all about us! But, my soul, let us never be so wretched, so ungrateful, so wicked (since He is pleased to show so much love to us), as to suffer any more every empty toy, every idle roving imagination, every vain amusement, to take the place of Him in our mind, and banish Him from our thoughts. We cannot be without thinking of something all the day long; and what can we think of so noble, so desirable, so lovely, so profitable, so delightful, as our God! What are we then doing, when we let whole days pass in thinking of everything else but Him. Surely this can never be loving Him with our whole mind, or indeed loving Him at all; for where our treasure is, there both our heart and mind will be.

3. Consider the great advantage of ever keeping God in our mind, by recollection of thought and remembrance of His presence. It is a most powerful restraint to keep us from sin; it is a perpetual spur to make us run in the way of virtue; it furnishes us with counsel in our doubts, comfort in our afflictions, encouragement in our labours, defence against our enemies, and protection in dangers: it enlivens our faith, animates our hope, gives a continual increase to divine charity, and brings us in some measure into heaven whilst we are here living upon earth; by ever keeping us in the company of God, invested as it were with Him on all sides, and employed about Him, by contemplation

and love. Oh, how true it is, that as dissipation of thought and forgetfulness of God is the source of all our evil, so recollection of the mind in God is the source of all good! How happy then are those souls that always seek in this manner the face of the Lord, and turn their whole mind to Him and His love.

Conclusion. Banish from thee all impertinent thoughts and vain amusements, all roving imaginations and useless schemes, which have too often hitherto occupied thy mind, and shut out thy God; and then thy Beloved will quickly return to thee, and make thy soul His paradise.

FRIDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

On loving God with our whole Strength.

1. Consider that the great precept of divine love claims also our whole strength: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole strength." As then, by virtue of the commandment of loving God with our whole mind, we are bound to give Him our thoughts; so, by being commanded to love Him with our whole strength, we are to give Him also our words and actions. We ourselves are His, and that by many titles: we were made by Him and for Him alone; and therefore, as the whole fund is His, so also the whole produce; as the tree is His, so ought all the fruit to grow for Him; it would be a crying injustice to alienate it from Him. Wherefore the love of God is not only to reside in our heart, to reign in all the powers of our soul, and to fill our mind, but ought also to show itself in our conversation, and to regulate our words and actions, so as to give each one of them its due perfection. And this is loving God with our whole strength.

2. Consider that the true love of God is like a fire which cannot lie idle: neither does it content itself with affection only, it always proceeds to effects. It works great things when occasion and opportunity serve, and when these are wanting, it will do wonders at least, by the perfection it will give even to the least and most ordinary of our actions. This constant aiming at perfection, in our daily actions, is one of the most important lessons of a spiritual life, and is the true practice of loving God with our whole strength. Now this perfection of our ordinary actions depends upon the purity and perfection of the intention from which they flow. The intention is pure when it aims at God alone; it is perfect when it does all for the love of God, and for the greater glory of God. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all for the glory of God," says the Apostle (1 Cor. x. 31). The meanest action in life is ennobled by this intention; it becomes even an act of

divine love, and a step to unite the soul to God. So that the readiest way to come to love God with all our strength is to direct the whole body of our actions to Him, by the pure and perfect intention of ever doing His holy will, and procuring in all things His greater glory.

3. Consider that in order to love God with all our strength, by the perfection of our ordinary actions, besides this purity of intention which ought both to go before and to accompany all we do or say, we should also labour in the progress of all our actions and conversations, to season them as it were, and to sanctify them by the exercise of frequent aspirations of divine love. This may be practised by turning our souls on every occasion to our Beloved, considered as intimately present with us, by longing after Him; offering our whole selves to Him; rejoicing in His glory; begging for the advancement of the kingdom of His love, both in ourselves, and in the whole world; and lamenting to see Him everywhere so much offended, and His love so much slighted. Nothing contributes more to advance the soul in the love of God, than diligence in this exercise.

Conclusion. Season all thy actions in this manner with divine love, both by beginning them with a pure intention of the glory of God, and accompanying them with frequent acts of love: thus thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole strength.

SATURDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

On returning Love for Love.

1. Consider that besides the most pressing motive we have to love God by reason of His infinite beauty and perfection, and the infinite charms that centre in Him, to command our love; besides all those attractions which are found in His infinite mercy, bounty, wisdom, truth, and His other attributes, which are all infinitely beyond all that can be expressed or conceived by the heart of man; besides also, that all our happiness is found in Him, and that His love is our greatest honour, interest, pleasure, and that which alone can bring us to our sovereign good, even to the possession of God Himself; in fine, besides that the whole creation in general, and every creature in particular, call upon us to love God, and publish aloud His infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, to engage us to love Him; a generous soul finds a most strong and urgent motive to love God, in the consideration of the love that He has, and has had for us from all eternity, and the innumerable benefits He has bestowed upon us, in consequence of His eternal love. And yet, O strange ingratitude and insensibility! the far greater part of mortals, not-

withstanding all these numberless motives of love, are still cold in the midst of so much fire which surrounds them, as it were, on all sides; they still refuse a return of love, and still prefer the meanest of these earthly toys, and even mere filth, before their most loving God. O ye heavens, be astonished at so much baseness, so much blindness, and so much wickedness!

2. Consider what kind of love this is that God bears to us. He has loved us first; His love has no beginning, is eternal; His thought and heart are always upon us. His love is most faithful and constant, His love never forsakes them that do not forsake His love. His love is most generous, it imparts all good to His beloved, it prepares an eternal kingdom for them, it gives them Himself for eternity. His love is most pure and disinterested; He desires no other return from His beloved, but their love; and this not for any service it will do Him (for it can do Him none), but to unite them to Himself, and to make them happy. In fine, His love is infinite, both in its origin, which is Himself, and its communications, by giving us an eternal and infinite good, which is also Himself. Stand, my soul, astonished to see that this great God, this boundless Majesty, should have such love for thee! Give Him in return all that thou canst, by loving Him with all thy power, and He will be thine for ever.

3. Consider the benefits, as well general as particular, that we have received, and daily do receive, from the infinite goodness of this our eternal Lover.—"He is the Author of all our good;" our very being, our soul and body, are His gift. He has preserved us, He has nourished and cherished us from the first moment of our conception to this hour; He has watched over us with incomparable love; He has defended us from a thousand evils. He has given His Angels a charge over us. He has sent His own Son from heaven to deliver us from sin and hell, and to purchase all mercy, grace, and salvation for us. The whole life of the Son of God upon earth was employed in serving us; He suffered for us the very worst of torments; He shed His most precious blood for the love of us. He has left with us all manner of helps, in order to bring us to Himself, and to His heavenly kingdom; His Word, His Church, His sacrifice, His sacraments, His body and blood, His graces, His inspirations. He has even then heaped favours upon us, and kept us from death and hell, when we were His enemies by mortal sin; He has waited for us with infinite patience, He has called us back with infinite tenderness, He has received us with open arms when we have returned to Him, and has mercifully overlooked all our follies and disloyalties, all our ingratitude and repeated treasons against Him; besides many instances of His particular Providence, which every one of us has met with in some part or other of our life. And shall not all these, and innumerable other benefits and favours

oblige us to love Him? O! blessed by all creatures be His goodness for ever!"

Conclusion. Have thy thought and heart always upon Him, whose love is always heaping favours upon thee, and make a perpetual return of love to thy eternal Lover.

ROGATION SUNDAY.

On the Devotion of the Time.

1. Consider that the days between this Sunday and the Ascension of our Lord, are days of devotion, and are called Rogation-days, because they are set aside by the Church for solemn prayers and supplications in order to turn away the wrath of God, provoked by our sins, and to remove far from us the scourges of war, plague, famine, and the like; to implore His mercy for ourselves and for all His people; and to beg His blessing upon the fruits of the earth. As the first institution of the devotion of these days was occasioned by a terrible scene of disasters and visible judgments of God upon the people, to which a stop was put by dedicating these three days to prayer and penance; so the success that attended this first essay has encouraged the Church to an annual practice of the like devotion ever since. Hence we may learn, with what dispositions of soul we ought to present ourselves before the throne of grace at this time; with what a lively sense of the guilt of our sins and of the judgments we deserve for them, both here and hereafter; with what desire to return to God and to offer Him the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart, and to join, at this time, with the whole people of God, in suing in a proper manner for His mercy, with most humble and fervent prayers. See, my soul, if these be thy dispositions.

2. Consider that although we do not every day feel the heavy hand of divine justice, by the experience of public calamities, or other visible judgments, yet if we consider the guilt of so many crying sins, not only of particular persons, but even of whole nations, which are continually calling to God for vengeance, we shall find too much reason to apprehend that the sword of God's justice is even now hanging over our heads; and that the worst of His judgments will quickly fall upon Christendom in general, if not averted by prayer and penance. This consideration ought to determine all Christians, even the most innocent, if they have any concern for the public danger, or true charity for the souls of their neighbours, gladly to embrace so happy an opportunity as this of joining in humiliation and prayer, in order to prevent the thunder of heaven from suddenly breaking over our heads; and

hurrying away thousands into the bottomless pit. And as for every sinner, now is the most favourable time for him to sue for mercy, because the whole Church joins in a particular manner in praying for all sinners. And if he should neglect this opportunity, what may he not justly fear from his repeated treasons; from the wrath of God above, ready to fall upon him; from the mouth of hell below, gaping to devour him; from the devil to whom he has sold himself; and from that monster, mortal sin, which he always carries about with him? O sinners, neglect not these days of salvation, lest they never return to you any more.

3. Consider the encouragement we have both in the Epistle and the Gospel of the Rogations, to look for mercy and for all good, both for ourselves and for our neighbours, from humble and fervent prayer. In the Epistle (Jas. v.) we are taught the great efficacy of continual prayer, with an exhortation to pray for one another, in order to salvation; and a declaration of what the reward will be of them that contribute to the salvation of others. In the Gospel (Luke xi.) we are exhorted by Christ our Lord to a holy importunity and perseverance in prayer; and we are taught by the example of a friend, and of a father, to look for good gifts from our heavenly Father by means of earnest prayer. Oh, what a friend, indeed, what a parent have we in Him! or who is like to Him in bounty and mercy? Let us then be encouraged by these divine oracles, "to go with confidence at this time to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid" (Heb. iv. 16).

Conclusion. Join at this time with the whole Church of God in prayer and penance, that thou mayest obtain mercy both for thyself and for thy neighbours. Heaven can never resist a general assault, made by the whole people of God by means of prayer when joined with a contrite and humble heart.

ROGATION MONDAY.

On the means of attaining the Love of God.

1. Consider that as the desire of wisdom is the beginning of wisdom, so the first step to the love of God is an earnest desire to love Him. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled" (Matt. v.). This desire makes us pray frequently, seek incessantly, knock earnestly, at the gate of divine love. It makes us rise early in quest of this heavenly wisdom, it makes us glad to part with all things else, that we may purchase this precious pearl, that we may acquire this incomparable treasure. He that with this desire, aspires after divine love, already begins to possess what he desires; and the more he

relishes the sweetness of what he begins to possess, the more he aspires after it. Thus the desire of love begets love, and love begets a stronger desire, which begets a stronger love. So that the great means of learning to love God, is, by repeated desires and acts of love, to taste and see how sweet God is.

2. Consider that divine love will not be found by us, nor come to dwell in our souls, if we take no care to keep our inward house clean and pure for our beloved. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v.). So that if we entertain in our interior any irregular company, that is, if our affections are set upon worldly vanities, upon filthy lucre, upon sensual pleasures, divine love will not come near us; because it cannot endure such unclean company, nor dwell in a soul that is enslaved to worldly desires and disorderly passions. These are to be parted with, or at least brought into order and subjection, if we would learn to love God. This is the meaning of that Gospel lesson of selling all, to acquire the precious pearl of the kingdom of God, by His love reigning in our souls. The kingdom of divine love will allow of no rival, no usurper, no rebel within it. The spouse of divine love must belong wholly to her spouse alone; she must be a garden close shut to all others, a fountain sealed up for Him alone (Cant. iv.). So that another necessary means of attaining divine love is a general mortification of all irregular affections.

3. Consider that the sovereign means of acquiring divine love is the daily exercise of mental prayer, which employs all the powers of the soul in waiting upon God. Here the memory represents all the motives we have to love Him; the understanding is taught to know Him; the affections of the will are inflamed at His presence. This, then, is the true school of love. My soul, let us daily frequent it, not only by having a regular time fixed for this great exercise of love, but by practising it in some measure at all times, by a spirit of recollection, by a continual sense of God's presence, by frequently calling back the soul to Him from her distractions, by repeated aspirations and ejaculations of love. This is walking with God indeed, like the ancient saints; this is taking God along with us, wherever we are going, and whatever we are doing; this is walking in love. Happy is that life which is thus dedicated to divine love!

Conclusion. Embrace all the means that may bring thee to this happiness. Begin from this hour to set out in quest of this fountain of life! Let no opposition of earth or hell discourage thee. Never leave off thy search, till thou come to drink of this heavenly water, which will become in thee a fountain springing up to everlasting life.

ROGATION TUESDAY.

On Acts of divine Love.

1. Consider that the love of God is like a fire : its nature is to be always in motion, and always to tend upwards. It quickly expires if it lies idle. Wherefore if we would keep it alive, we must nourish it, by frequent acts of love ; and those not mere verbal acts, by telling God that we love Him, whilst our heart perhaps is far from Him, but by the real exercise of loving God both in our heart and in our works. We exercise the love of God in our heart, by affection ; we exercise it in our works, by its effects. We love God with a love of chaste concupiscence, when in heart and work we tend to Him as our sovereign good, and aspire after the eternal enjoyment of Him. We love Him with a love of benevolence, that is, of sincere and perfect friendship and charity, when both in heart and work we give our whole selves, with all our thoughts, words, and deeds, to Him, as being infinitely good in Himself. It is just we should exercise ourselves in acts of the love of God in these ways, as in both He is infinitely amiable ; but more especially that we should tend to love Him with the love of benevolence, by giving ourselves and all things to Him.

2. Consider that benevolence is that love by which we wish all manner of good to the person beloved ; a love by which we earnestly seek and procure whatever may be for his honour, interest, or pleasure ; by which we delight in all his advantages, and are concerned at all his losses. Wherefore, if we would make proper acts of the love of benevolence towards God, we must desire, seek, and procure, as much as in us lies, the greater honour and glory of His name, and the propagation of His kingdom, both in our own hearts and throughout the whole world, and pray that all men may know Him, love Him, and serve Him ; we must rejoice at everything that is agreeable to His holy will, and be concerned at everything that offends Him. This is the proper exercise of the love of benevolence ; these are far better acts of divine charity, than merely telling God that we love Him. My soul, what are thy dispositions ? Dost thou sincerely desire and heartily pray, that all the world may know, love, and serve thy God ; that all His creatures in heaven and on earth, may give perpetual glory to Him ; that the reign of sin may be abolished, and that the kingdom of God may take possession of all hearts ; that none may resist or rebel against His orders, but that all may embrace and bow down, and adore His divine will ? If so, there is no doubt but thou lovest God. Such as these are perfect acts of the love of God.

3. Consider that the exercise of the love of God, which, above all others is recommended in holy Scripture, is loving His divine law and keeping His commandments. "This is the charity (that is, the love) of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John v. 3). "He that keepeth His word, in him, in very deed, the charity of God is perfected" (chap. ii. 5). The beloved disciple continually recommends acts of this kind of divine love, and the Psalms are full of aspirations of a soul that is in love with the holy law and commandments of God. This devotion to the commandments of God is loving God indeed with a true and effectual love, because it is giving up for His sake what is most dear to us, our own will and liberty, and making a present of it to Him; it is giving Him what He chiefly calls for at our hands. Whatsoever else we give Him can never content Him. He always prefers the sacrifice of obedience before all other sacrifices, because here we sacrifice our own dear will to His honour and glory. This kind of love is the safest from illusions, for whosoever loves the commandments of God, and His divine will, and makes all that is in him submit thereunto, most certainly loves God, and is in the right way that will bring him safe to God. No other devotion, without this, can secure any man.

Conclusion. Exercise thyself daily in all these ways of loving God, and ever remember that loving God and keeping His commandments go always hand in hand, because we cannot love God without loving His will, notified to us by His commandments.

ROGATION WEDNESDAY.

On other Exercises of the Love of God.

1. Consider that divine love is also exercised in the penitential way, by souls, that like Magdalene, of whom our Lord pronounced that many sins were forgiven her because she loved much, go daily to the feet of Christ in spirit, to wash them with their tears, flowing from a heart full of a sense of the infinite goodness of God, and of deep regret for having offended that infinite goodness by their sins. This exercise of penitential love, as we see in the case of Magdalene, is most acceptable to our Lord, and most effectual for obtaining the discharge of all our sins; and if diligently pursued, is capable of advancing even those that have been the greatest sinners, to a high degree of virtue and sanctity. And whosoever has forfeited his baptismal innocence by mortal sin, if he would follow the rules of Christian prudence, in choosing the safest way, in a case where his all is at stake, should endeavour to pursue this exercise of penitential love, and never end it but with his life. Thus did all those

great penitents of old, who became afterwards such glorious Saints. And this kind of exercise of love will become in a manner natural to all such as have a right sense of what God is, and what sin is, and of the dreadful evil they have been guilty of in offending, though it were but once in their life, so great and so good a God.

2. Consider that there are also other ways of mourning, in which we may exercise a love of God, most agreeable to Him, and beneficial to ourselves. Thus when we sit down at the foot of the cross, and there contemplating the extreme anguish and distress, the stripes and wounds, the racking pains and torments of our dear Redeemer, with all that complication of sufferings in all kinds, which He endured in His passion, for the love of us; we excite in our souls suitable affections of an ardent love of compassion for our crucified Lord. Let our tears flow at the sight of His blood; which as it shows in the most sensible manner His tender affection for us, so it most strongly calls for a return of our love, accompanied with bitter grief to see our beloved treated with so much cruelty and contempt. With the same concern that every true lover has to see the outrages offered to his beloved, we may also exercise a love most agreeable to our Lord, in mourning for the innumerable sins that are daily committed against Him throughout the whole world; to see His infinite goodness slighted, His sacred laws and ordinances trodden under foot, His mercies continually abused, and His most adorable Majesty treated with the utmost contempt, by poor blind mortals, made by Him, and for Him, redeemed by the blood of His Son, and loaded with innumerable favours, to engage them to love and serve Him. How can any true lover of God endure to see these outrages offered to His infinite Majesty, without having his heart broken with grief, to see his love thus abused?

3. Consider that besides these exercises of the love of benevolence in the penitential and compassionate way, there is another most perfect exercise of love, and which comes the nearest to the love of the blessed in Heaven. That is, in the way of joy and congratulation; as when we rejoice in God, and in His boundless perfections; when we are delighted to think that He is what He is, infinitely good, infinitely holy, infinitely happy, infinitely perfect; that He is the sovereign Lord of all, and that nothing can be added to Him, because He is every way infinite. O what a comfort, what a pleasure, what a joy it is to a true lover of God, to think that whatsoever may come to himself, or to any other thing in the world, his Love at least, whom he loves without comparison more than himself, and all things else, will always be infinitely glorious, infinitely rich, and infinitely happy! How like is this love to that of the Blessed, even to that love that makes them blessed, which is an eternal joy

in God, and in all the beauties and perfections they contemplate in Him: this is their eternal delight.

Conclusion. Dedicate thyself, for time and eternity, to this most perfect love of God. Make it thy employment here, and it will be thy eternal reward hereafter. In the meantime, labour to promote as much as thou canst, upon every occasion, the praise and glory of thy Maker, the interests of His kingdom, the fulfilling of His will, as well in thyself, as in all others; be concerned at everything that displeases Him, put thy heart continually in His hands, give thyself and all things else to Him a hundred times in the day. Such acts as these, frequently repeated in the day, will ensure to thee the rich treasure of divine love; by such exercises thou wilt effectually choose the better part which will never be taken from thee.

ASCENSION DAY.

On the Ascension of our Lord.

1. Consider that our Lord, having employed forty days upon earth to comfort and encourage His disciples, to confirm their faith in His Resurrection, and to instruct them in the mysteries of His kingdom, on the fortieth day taking them to Mount Olivet, lifted up His hands and gave them His blessing, and so ascended up visibly to Heaven before their eyes, till a cloud interposed and took Him out of their sight. Bow thyself down, my soul, to receive with joy and gratitude this blessing of thy Saviour ascending to His Father, and thy Father; follow Him in spirit, and contemplate the triumphs and joy of all the heavenly legions that come out to meet Him, and attend Him to His Father's throne. See how He brings along with Him the patriarchs, prophets, and spirits of the just, into those regions of eternal bliss, and presents them to His Father as the first-fruits of His purchase, which He had made upon earth, with His precious blood. See with joy thy human nature, in the person of thy Lord, raised above all the Cherubim and Seraphim, and seated at the right hand of God; and exercise thyself upon this occasion in acts of love, of congratulation, and of rejoicing at the exaltation and triumph of thy Saviour.

2. Consider that our Lord, by His Ascension, has taken possession of the kingdom of Heaven, not for Himself only, but for us also. He purchased this kingdom for us with His own blood, He opened the gates of it by His death, He showed us the way to it by His resurrection, and by His ascension He has given us an earnest of our coming one day to reign there with Him. He is our head, we are His members; it is but natural that where the head is, there the members also should be; it

would be unnatural, it would be keeping them in a state of violence, to keep them separate from their head. What comfort then to Christian souls to see their head, by this mystery of His Ascension unto Heaven, raised to the highest seat in that eternal kingdom, in order to draw them thither after Him, and in the meantime, preparing a place for them, that He may, in proper time, come and "take them to Himself, that where He is they also may be!" (John xiv.).

3. Consider what further motives we have for rejoicing in the Ascension of our Lord, when we reflect that He has entered into Heaven in quality of our parent, our friend, our advocate and mediator, and of our high priest. What encouragements are here to raise our hopes! We have a tender Father in Heaven, the true parent of our souls, who has power in the court of Heaven, and takes exceedingly to heart our true interest; we have there, in the person of our Redeemer, a most affectionate friend, who loves us with an incomparable love; we have a most faithful mediator and advocate, who ever pleads for us with the powerful eloquence of His sacred wounds, which He continually presents to His Father in our behalf; we have a high priest, who to make atonement for us, has carried into this heavenly sanctuary, not the blood of oxen, or of goats, but His own most sacred blood, shed for obtaining our everlasting redemption. See, my soul, upon how many accounts thou oughtest to rejoice on the festival of the Ascension of our Lord, if thou either lovest Him or thyself.

Conclusion. Consider this festival of the Ascension of our Lord, as one of the principal solemnities of the year. The Church of God considers it as such, and, therefore, daily commemorates in a particular manner, in the most sacred mysteries, not only the Passion and Resurrection, but also the Ascension of our heavenly Spouse, as the mystery which put the last seal to the great work of our redemption, and placed this flesh of ours in heaven, even at the right hand of the Father, which, at the fall of our first parents, had been sentenced to return to its original earth.

FRIDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION.

On the Lessons we are to learn on the Ascension of our Lord.

1. Consider that as we ought to imitate the Resurrection of our Lord, by a spiritual resurrection from the death of sin to the life of grace, so we must also imitate the Ascension of our Lord, by a spiritual ascension into heaven, and by dwelling there in spirit with Him; that as we hope one day to ascend thither after Him in effect, we may learn the way, by ascending after Him every

day in affection. Our Lord has told us that where our treasure is, there our heart shall also be. Our treasure is that which we love the most and the best of all things; now if this be Christ, as it ought to be, as He is ascended into heaven, our treasure is in heaven, and therefore our heart should follow its treasure, by ascending after Him in spirit into heaven, and by fixing there its abode with its beloved. O happy ascension of love, which teaches the soul to find in some measure a heaven upon earth, and interiorly, to have always her conversation in heaven, whatever occupation or company she may be exteriorly engaged in upon earth!

2. Consider that in order to be qualified to ascend after Christ our Lord into heaven, we must first get rid of our vices and criminal passions, for none of these can be admitted into that blessed abode; there is no room for them there. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, can have no place in heaven; all their pursuits are earthly; instead of carrying the soul upwards towards heaven, they press her down towards hell. They are all slaves to Satan; they bind the poor soul fast in chains; they will not suffer her to follow Christ, they are His mortal enemies. See, then, my soul, if none of these have dominion over thee: see if pride, avarice, passion, or lust, have not more influence on thee, to keep thee from Christ in this region of sin and death, than the love of God has to draw thee up to heaven after Him. Beg of thy Lord, through His triumphant Ascension, by which "ascending on high He led captivity captive: He gave gifts to men" (Eph. iv. 8), that He would break thy bonds in sunder, which keep thee from ascending after Him, and by the precious gift of His grace, set thee at liberty to fly upwards with the wings of the dove, till thou canst come to repose in Him and with Him.

3. Consider that the soul can never be qualified to fly up towards heaven, by this spiritual ascension, so long as her wings, that is, her affections, are not disengaged. For as the bird cannot fly if its wings be either entangled or daubed with birdlime; so the soul cannot fly if her affections are either entangled in the nets of the world or defiled with the birdlime of a misplaced love. So that it is not enough for a soul that desires to ascend to heaven after Christ, to be free from lust or other scandalous excesses and passions; but she must also be disengaged in her affections from every love of person or thing that ties her down, as it were, to the earth; that captivates her thoughts, that fills her with solicitude and perplexity, or otherwise takes off her heart from the love of God. All such love as this disqualifies the soul from flying towards heaven; it keeps her far below, grovelling in the mire. Nor let her flatter herself that her affections are innocent, because the object is not of itself criminal; for let the object be what it will, it is a crime to

prefer it to God, or to love it so as to forfeit for its sake the love of God.

Conclusion. Be jealous of thyself, how thou placest thy affections upon earth, lest thou hinder thy flight towards thy true treasure in heaven : "my love is my weight," says St. Augustine, "that way am I carried, whithersoever I am carried."

SATURDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION.

Other Lessons to be learnt from the Ascension of our Lord.

1. Consider that as in consequence of the ascension of our Lord, we ought to be daily carried upon the wings of love up to Him in His heavenly kingdom ; so we ought, by this frequent ascending thither, to be daily more and more enamoured with that kingdom of love ; to conceive the highest idea of that incomprehensible happiness of the soul's being there eternally united to her God, and absorbed in Him, and with the most ardent desires, to long daily more and more for this fountain of life. But what, then, must the sentiments of the soul be, when, after she has begun, by the practice of this devotion, to relish something of the sweetness of the good things of her Lord in the land of the living, she finds herself still a prisoner in this foreign land, in this earthly Babylon ? O how does she wish to be delivered from this captivity ! to see an end of this long pilgrimage ! How does she lament her banishment in this vale of tears, at so great a distance from her true country ! How does she despise this miserable world, and even loathe its choicest enjoyments ! O my soul, that these were thy sentiments !

2. Consider, and give ear to the exhortation of the Apostle (Col. iii. 1) : "If thou be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God ; mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then shall you also appear with Him in glory." How happy are those Christians who enter into these sentiments, on occasion of the Ascension of our Lord ; who consider Christ as the great object of their love and their true life ; and, as He is in heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, turn all their intentions and affections towards heaven ; who consider their true life as absent and hidden from them here below, and, therefore, continually aspire after that happy revolution when they shall cease to die and begin to live ! And, in the meantime, whilst they remain in this region of death, they seek, as much as they can, to divest themselves of this body of death, by mortifying, as the Apostle admonishes, their members

that are upon earth, and by crucifying the flesh with its vices and concupiscences.

3. Consider, as we are informed by Church history, that our Lord, at His Ascension, left the last prints of His feet upon the top of Mount Olivet, whence He ascended; we may hence learn, that the true way for all who desire to follow Christ, by ascending after Him to heaven, is to have His footsteps always before their eyes, and to walk in them, by a diligent imitation of His life and conversation. They that are careful to walk in His footsteps are His disciples indeed; and they that are His disciples indeed, will infallibly, if they persevere, ascend to heaven after Him, and be for ever with Him.

Conclusion. Lay up in thy heart all these lessons which Christ desires to teach thee in His Ascension; and so follow His footsteps, that nothing in life or death may ever separate thee from Him.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

On the Precept of Charity to our Neighbour.

1. Consider that after that greatest and first commandment, of loving God with our whole heart and soul, the next divine precept is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This, saith our Lord, is like to the other; and indeed it has so necessary a connection with it, that we cannot fulfil the one without the other. "God is charity," says the beloved disciple (1 John iv. 16), "and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him." And again, "he that loveth not (his neighbour) knoweth not God; for God is charity" (ver. 8). And again, "if any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" (ver. 20). These two precepts of charity, by which we are commanded, in the first place, to love God above all things; and, in the next, our neighbour as ourselves, contain an abridgment of the whole duty of a Christian. They are two branches that spring from the same root, and belong to the self-same divine virtue, because the motives that oblige us to love God for His own sake, oblige us also to love all that are made after His image, and redeemed by the blood of His Son, for the sake of their Maker and Redeemer. He requires this love of us, and requires it in such a manner that we should love Him in our neighbours, and love them in Him. O infinite goodness and bounty of our God! that, notwithstanding the immense distance there is between Him and us, He should be pleased to put us, as it were, on an equality, by requiring that we should love one another with the like love, and for the same motive as we love Himself.

2. Consider that charity to our neighbour is so necessary to salvation, that without it, though we should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, had the gift of prophecy, and all knowledge of the deepest mysteries, and faith strong enough to remove mountains, we should still be nothing; and though we should give our whole substance to the poor, and our bodies to be burnt, it would profit us nothing, saith St. Paul (1 Cor. xiii.). "He that loveth not," saith St. John, "abideth in death" (1 John iii. 14). "He is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes" (chap. ii. 11). And this charity which is so necessary to salvation must be general: for, as we learn from our Lord in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke x.), "all men, without exception of nation or opinion, are here to be considered as our neighbours: and if there should be any one mortal, whom we should exclude from our charity, our heavenly Father would exclude us from His mercy" (Matt. xvii. 25).

3. Consider how much our Lord takes to heart that we should have this mutual love and charity for one another. He has made it His favourite commandment; the very badge by which He would have His disciples known and distinguished. "I give you a new commandment," saith He (John xiii. 34, 35), "that you love one another as I have loved you. By this shall men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." And (chap. xv. 12): "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." And this mutual love for one another He desires may be so perfect, that it may, in some measure, resemble the love and union there is between Him and His Father: as He declared in that prayer He made for His disciples (John xviii. 20, 21): "And not for them only," said He, "do I pray, but for them also, who, through their word, shall believe in me; that they all may be one, as Thou Father in me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me." This mutual love, this union and charity, He inculcates in these strong terms, in this last conference in His mortal life with His beloved disciples, that both they and we might consider it His last dying injunction, and as a most precious legacy which He has bequeathed to us all. O my soul, embrace this legacy of love which has been thus left thee by thy Lord, dying for the love of thee.

Conclusion. Prove thyself henceforward to be indeed a disciple of Christ, by this spirit of universal charity, as He died out of charity for all. In the beginning of the Church, "the multitude of the believers had but one heart and one soul" (Acts iv. 32). Such was their mutual love and union. O blessed charity, when shall we see thee once more reign in this manner amongst Christians?

MONDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

On the Excellence of fraternal Charity.

1. Consider that charity is the queen of virtues, and the most excellent of them all, according to the doctrine of the Apostle (1 Cor. xiii. 13), and this, not only as loving God in Himself, but also as loving Him in our neighbour; for, as the motive is the same in both cases, so the virtue is the same. Hence St. Peter calls upon all Christians (1 Pet. iv. 8): "Before all things have a constant mutual charity; for charity covereth a multitude of sins." And St. Paul (Col. iii. 14), "Above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection." He adds (Rom. xiii. 8, 10), "That the love of our neighbour is the fulfilling of the law and commandments of God," and (Gal. v. 14), "That all the law is fulfilled in this one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Hence also St. John, the beloved disciple, both in his words and in his writings, continually inculcated this duty of loving each other, as the favourite virtue of Jesus Christ, and in a manner, the whole duty of a Christian. Let us then embrace with all our affection this amiable virtue, this chief favourite of Christ and His saints; let us value it as an inestimable treasure, and be ever willing rather to lose anything than this blessed charity.

2. Consider that we may with truth apply to charity what the wise man writes of wisdom; that "all good things came to him together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands" (Wisd. vii. 11). What these riches are that come through the hands of charity we learn from the Apostle (1 Cor. xiii. 4, &c.), "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own (that is, she is not selfish), she is not provoked to anger, she thinketh no evil, she rejoiceth not in iniquity (that is, in anything that is wrong), but rejoiceth in the truth (being pleased with all that is right and true), she beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," &c. See, my soul, how many virtues are the constant attendants and offspring of charity. How amiable is this character of the truly charitable Christian! How lovely is the parent of all this heavenly train!

3. Consider that charity, in the strictest sense, is, indeed, a heavenly virtue; as well because she maintains her ground in heaven, and receives her full perfection there, where faith and hope are no more ("Charity," saith the Apostle (1 Cor. xiii. 1), "never falleth away"), as also because the eternal charity of the Saints is no small part of their heavenly happiness; the love of

God is their essential bliss; the love of one another in God, and the joy they conceive at one another's happiness, multiplies, we may say, their heaven to as many fold as there are happy spirits and Saints in heaven. And no wonder, since charity, even here below, when it is perfect, brings with it unspeakable joy, and in a manner a heaven upon earth; by keeping all the passions under, and establishing the reign of peace and joy in the soul. On the other hand, where there is no charity, the passions are let loose; hatred, envy, jealousy, revenge, and the rest: the soul is always in a storm, she is a stranger to peace, she is in confusion and darkness, the very image of the damned in hell, where it is no small part of their misery that they cannot love.

Conclusion. Aspire as much as thou art able after this heavenly charity; she will teach thee, whilst thou art here upon earth, to emulate the love of the blessed in heaven. she alone will bring thee to their happy company.

TUESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

On the Exercise of fraternal Charity.

1. Consider that the charity we owe to our neighbour, like that by which we love God, is in the nature of a fire, which is ever in motion, and must be kept alive by being nourished with its proper fuel, by means of repeated acts; and these not exercised only by affection, but by effects: "My little children," saith St. John (1 John iii. 15), "let us love, not in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Fraternal charity is not a love of concupiscence; it is not selfish love that looks no further than the honour, profit, or pleasure which may accrue to one's self from our neighbour, it is a love of sincere benevolence. Now as it is the nature of the love of benevolence to desire and to promote whatever may be for the real good of the person beloved; to be delighted with all that is to his advantage, and to be concerned at all that hurts him; so this benevolent love, which we owe our neighbour, by virtue of the precept of fraternal charity, is to be kept alive in our soul, by repeated acts of its own kind; by frequently exercising in favour of our neighbours, as well the spiritual, as the corporal works of mercy, with a pure intention of God's glory and their welfare, by bewailing their errors and vices, by earnestly praying for their conversion and salvation, and neglecting nothing in our power to procure it. Do we evidence charity for our neighbours, by the exercise of such acts as these?

2. Consider that the true charity we are commanded to bear

our neighbours, is to love them for God's sake, to love them in God, and in order to God. Fraternal charity is a branch of that same divine virtue by which we love God ; and ought ever to be grounded upon the same divine motive of God's own infinite goodness. No carnal, worldly, or natural affection, influenced by flesh and blood, or by any other consideration than God, can be called charity. If then we would fulfil this great precept, we must not content ourselves with loving our neighbours in any manner ; heathens and publicans often love one another, and assist one another, and yet they are void of divine charity. But, we must love according to God, and with relation to God ; we must love in our neighbours the image of God ; we must consider them as made by Him and for Him, and as redeemed by the precious blood of His Son ; we must love them for His sake, and because it is His holy will and commandment. And we must exercise the acts of this love, by contributing on every occasion all that in us lies to bring them to the love of God here, and to His kingdom hereafter, that they may glorify Him in a happy eternity. This is charity indeed.

3. Consider by what rules we are to be directed and regulated in the exercise of the love of our neighbour. The old commandment of the divine law was to love every neighbour as ourselves. The new commandment of the Gospel of Christ, is to love every neighbour "even as Christ has loved us" (John xiii. 34). Have we ever seriously reflected upon the perfection of the love which these rules require of us ? "To love our neighbour as ourselves." O how tender is the love we bear ourselves ! how intent are we upon our own welfare ! how sensible of everything that we apprehend as an evil to us ! Is the love of our neighbour anything like this ? Do we treat them as we would desire to be treated ourselves ? Are we concerned at the evils which befall them, as if they had befallen ourselves ? I fear we cannot say it. Again, "To love our neighbour as Christ has loved us." O what a love is this ! He laid down His very life for us ; and this without any desert on our side ; for we deserved nothing but hell ; we were His enemies by sin. Can our love for our neighbour stand the test of this rule ? Are we willing to part with our own humour, convenience, inclination, pleasure or satisfaction, for the love of our neighbour, rather than give him occasion of grief or sin ? If not, how far are we from loving our neighbour as Christ has loved us !

Conclusion. Exercise daily repeated acts of fraternal charity, both in the affective and the effective way ; lest otherwise thy love for thy neighbour, for want of nourishment, quickly languish and die. Have thy eye always upon those two great rules of charity, and by them regulate thy love to him.

WEDNESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

On the different Branches of fraternal Charity.

1. Consider that charity is fruitful in offspring, and spreads itself into different branches, in order to make the whole man perfect, by regulating both his judgment and his will, and directing him in his thoughts, words, and actions. For there is a charity that corrects the natural bent of our corruption, which is ever tending to suspect and judge the worst of our neighbours, and to be harsh and censorious in their regard. And there is a charity that inclines the will in their favour, so as to wish them well in every respect, and to forgive all injuries. There is a charity that employs the thoughts, in studying to promote their good, and to prevent and remedy their evil. And there is a charity that directs the tongue, and restrains it from uttering words to the prejudice of any one. In fine, there is a charity that seasons and sweetens the whole body of our actions, so far as they relate to our neighbours, and squares them all according to that golden rule of doing in everything as we would be done by. The practice of all these branches of charity in and for God, makes a perfect Christian, and brings us to God.

2. Consider that among the branches of fraternal charity, there is one that our Lord seems to take in a special manner to heart; insomuch that He has declared our eternal lot shall be decided by our diligence or negligence in the exercise of it (Matt. xxv.), and this is charity to the poor. These He declares He has substituted in His own stead, and what do we do for them He takes as done for Himself (ver. 43, 45). This branch of charity, duly exercised in proportion to every man's circumstances, will bring thousands one day into the happy tabernacles of everlasting life. But where shall the unjust stewards then appear, who, having the substance of their master, viz., their worldly riches, intrusted in their hands, with express orders to employ their superfluities at least in relieving the necessity of His poor children, either covetously detain or prodigally squander away that which should be their support, and to which they have an indisputable title? Alas! what a figure will their extravagant expense then make! What account will they be able to give of all that they have sacrificed to pride and vanity, to luxury and intemperance, to gaming and criminal diversions! Will not all these robberies of the substance of the poor cry to heaven against them for vengeance on that day?

3. Consider that there is still another branch of charity, the most difficult of all, and yet absolutely necessary to salvation,

and that is, to love our enemies. "I say to you," saith our Lord (Matt. v. 44), "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." And this He insists upon in such a manner as to exclude from His mercy here, and from His kingdom hereafter, all such as exclude any one, how much soever an enemy, from their charity. But how shall we acquire, or how shall we practise, this charity for our enemies? It is not a virtue of our own growth; it must come down to us from heaven, from our great Father, "who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust." It is by fervent prayer we must obtain it, and, having got it, must lay it up in our hearts as a rich heavenly treasure, and exercise it as the saints have done, by praying for our enemies in sincerity of heart, and seeking on all occasions to overcome, in their regard, evil with good. Oh, how happy shall we be, if by any such means as these we bring them, that before were our enemies, to be for the time to come friends both to God and to us! It is what the saints have often done by their charity, by their meekness, and by their prayers.

Conclusion. Labour with all thy power both to acquire and to exercise all these branches of charity, if thou desirest to come to God, who is charity, and who is not to be come at but by charity.

THURSDAY THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

On the great Pattern of Charity.

1. Consider how Christ Jesus our Lord has given us Himself for a pattern of perfect charity, in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke x.). He came down from His throne above to save poor man, who had unhappily fallen among the infernal robbers, and was stript by them of all grace, and grievously wounded in all his faculties. He was the Good Shepherd, who came down to seek with sorrow the lost sheep, in order to lay him upon His own shoulders, and carry him home with joy to His heavenly fold. It is here we discover the infinite charity both of the Father and of the Son. "By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us," says the beloved disciple, "because God has sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we may live by Him. In this is charity; not as though we had loved God, but because He hath first loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 9, 10).

2. Consider that the whole life of Christ was a continual exercise of divine charity. From the first moment of His conception, in the womb of His blessed Mother, till His death on the Cross, His soul was ever employed in loving His Heavenly Father, and

in offering Himself to His will; and for the love of Him, and because it was His will, He dedicated His whole life to the love of us; ever thinking of us, praying for us, and labouring for our eternal salvation. But oh the infinite charity He has shown us in all that He endured in His passion and death for the love of us! Christians, pass over in your minds all the stages of His passion, from His prayer and agony in the garden to His death on the Cross, and see the multitude and variety of torments He has there suffered for us. How much have our sins cost this innocent Lamb of God! How dearly has He loved us! O my soul, in the midst of all these tortures, He had thee in His heart; and even then was pleading thy cause with His Eternal Father when, by thy sins, thou wast crucifying Him. What return shall we make Him for this infinite love!

3. Consider that the Son of God not only loved us during the whole course of His mortal life, and loved us even unto death, by laying down His life for us, but He has carried His love beyond the bounds of death, in an admirable legacy which He bequeathed us the night before His passion, by means of which, to satisfy His love, He remains with us in the divine mysteries even to the end of the world. Here He feeds our souls with His precious body and blood; He unites us to Himself in such a manner as to abide in us, and we in Him; here He is a perpetual source of grace, of love, and of true life to our souls; He communicates Himself to us like the manna of heaven for the support of our pilgrimage, till He brings us to the true land of promise, where He will lovingly give Himself to us for all eternity. And shall not so much charity on His part oblige us to dedicate our whole souls to this divine virtue?

Conclusion. Have always before thy eyes this great pattern of love, that thou mayest learn from Him how thou art to love both thy God and thy neighbour.

N. B.—As the festivals of St. George, St. Philip, and St. James, and of the Finding of the Cross, usually fall between Easter and Ascension, we shall set down in this place the meditations that are to be read on these days.

APRIL 23.

On St. George.

1. Consider that we know little more of the particulars of St. George's life, than that he was a Christian soldier, an illustrious martyr, and a glorious saint He was a soldier; we all ought to be soldiers of Christ. In our baptism we have declared perpetual

war with the world, the flesh, and the devil, as the mortal enemies of our great King, the King of kings, Jesus Christ, the mortal enemies of our true country, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the mortal enemies of our own dear souls. We have enlisted ourselves in our confirmation under the royal standard of the Cross of Christ, and have obliged ourselves to bear Him perpetual allegiance and fidelity. But have we fulfilled these engagements? Have we behaved ourselves as becomes soldiers of Christ? Have we stood to our colours? Have we fought manfully the battles of our Lord? Or have we not rather deserted the cause? Have we not been rebels to our true King? Have we not changed sides, and preferred following the standard of Satan before that of Jesus Christ? Be confounded at your disloyalties, and now, at least, return to your allegiance.

2. Consider that St. George was a martyr, that is, a witness to the divinity of Christ, and to the truth of His doctrine, by choosing rather to lay down his life by the worst of torments than to renounce Jesus Christ and His Gospel. We are all obliged to be witnesses to Jesus Christ and to His Gospel, both by our profession and by our lives. We are all obliged to be in a constant disposition of suffering death itself, rather than renounce our allegiance to Christ by wilful sin. We must all make our way to heaven, through many tribulations and persecutions, in one shape or other, and so far are we all obliged to be martyrs. But alas! how far are we from the dispositions of the martyrs, who suffered cheerfully all kinds of torments for the love of Christ, when we are so unwilling to suffer the least contradiction to our humour, or to part with any of our pleasures, for the love of Him, and are quickly overcome by even slight temptation!

3. Consider that St. George, though living in the world, in a condition of life which one would think most opposite to sanctity, was nevertheless a glorious saint. To teach us that sanctity is consistent with every lawful calling, and that, if we are not saints, the fault is not in the station of life in which Providence has placed us, but in our not corresponding with those graces which God daily offers us to sanctify us in our calling. It is the love of God and our neighbours that makes saints; and the more perfect this love, the more perfect saints. As, then, no lawful calling excludes the love either of God or of our neighbour, so no lawful calling can hinder us from being even eminent saints if we are truly desirous of it. The soldier that loves God better is a greater saint than the monk that loves Him less.

Conclusion. Aim with all thy power at this heavenly love, as St. George did; and He that crowned St. George will also crown thee. The best way to honour the saints of God is to love and imitate in them that which made them saints.

MAY 1.

On St. Philip and St. James.

1. Consider that St. Philip and St. James were both disciples of Christ, trained in His heavenly school. In quality of Christians, we ought all to be such, as the very name of Christian signifies a disciple, that is, a scholar and follower of Jesus Christ. They were both called by Christ, and readily left all things to follow Him; and from that time inseparably adhered to Him. How often have we also been called by Him, by His interior graces? But have we ever yet followed Him in earnest? Have we ever yet seriously renounced the love of the world, and every tie that offered to keep us from Him? Have we as yet ever tried to be His constant attendants? They were both chosen by Christ to be of the number of the twelve apostles; they were both zealous preachers of the faith, and, after gaining innumerable souls to God, both sealed their doctrine with their blood. Happy we, if by our words or works we can be instrumental in gaining souls to God! Happy we, if we might suffer or even lay down our lives for so good a cause!

2. Consider that St. Philip had no sooner found Christ than he was anxious to make his friend Nathaniel partaker of the same happiness, and therefore brought him also to Christ. This was friendship indeed; this was true charity. Alas! how many nowadays engage their friends in partnership of their errors and vices! how many lead them with them to criminal diversions, or otherwise bring them into sin! but how few have the charity to carry them effectually to Christ! how few labour to reclaim them from the error of their ways, and from the broad road in which they are walking! How few suggest to their friends how they may find Christ, by a spiritual retreat, by a good general confession, or by the daily practice of meditation! This would be friendship indeed.

3. Consider that St. James was remarkable for the great austerity of his life, for his continual prayer. Do we desire to come to a share in his heavenly glory? The mortification of our own humours and passions, frequent self-denial, and a spirit of penance for our sins, joined with constant and fervent prayer, will bring us effectually to His company. We are told that, by reason of the great sanctity of his life, he alone was allowed to enter the Sanctum Sanctorum, or inward sanctuary of the temple. But what was a much greater advantage to him, was, that he was allowed to enter into the true sanctuary of God, in his own interior, as often as he pleased, and there to find Him all alone, and to converse as familiarly with Him as he pleased, by means

of mental prayer. This kind of entering into the sanctuary, God is both willing and desirous to allow us all; and the practice of this is the securest way to introduce us hereafter into His eternal sanctuary.

Conclusion. Honour and imitate these blessed saints, in such manner, during thy mortal pilgrimage, that they may receive thee one day into the mansions of everlasting bliss.

MAY 3.

On the Finding of the Cross.

1. Consider that on this day the Church of God, to honour the passion of Christ, celebrates the Finding of the Cross, that sacred instrument of our redemption, sanctified by the blood of the Son of God. This holy tree of life had lain deep buried in the earth, and a statue of Venus had been erected by the infidels over the place, when the pious Empress St. Helen was inspired to seek after it, and at length happily discovered it, together with the title that had been fastened to it, and the nails with which our Lord had been pierced. This discovery of the Cross of Christ was followed by illustrious miracles, to the greater glory of His Name, who had humbled Himself to the death of the Cross for our redemption. Give thanks, Christians, for this miraculous finding of the Cross of your Redeemer. Turn this day your devotion towards the triumphs of His sacred passion; it was on the Cross He was lifted up from the earth, and, beginning His reign from that tree, drew all things to Himself. Beg of Him now, by all His mercy, to draw at least your poor heart to Him!

2. Consider the lessons we are to learn on occasion of this festival, especially the dispositions we ought to be in with regard to the Cross. If we have not the courage to seek it like St. Helen, at least we ought to receive it when, without our seeking, it comes to us from the hand of Providence, and to lay it upon our shoulders in order to follow Him, who redeemed us by the Cross. If we did but know the treasures of grace and of comfort here, and of heavenly glory hereafter, which are laid up for us in the Cross, we should not only submit to it with patience, but embrace it with joy, as the inexhaustible source of all good both for time and eternity. Christians, assure yourselves there is no going to heaven without the Cross upon your shoulders. We must suffer with Christ, before we can reign with Him.

3. Consider that the Cross is the school of all Christian virtues. As our Lord was pleased to give us most excellent lessons of them all, from His Cross; so He gives us the means

and opportunity of exercising them all in bearing our cross which He allots us. Here we learn to imitate His perfect conformity to the will of His Father; we learn to practise His humility, by humbling ourselves under the hand of God; we learn the practice of His meekness, His patience, His charity for His enemies, and His obedience unto death; and, which is hardest of all for us to attain, His preferring in practice the poverty, pain, and ignominy of the Cross, before all the riches, pleasures, and honours of this world. O blessed school, in which we learn such heavenly lessons!

Conclusion. If thou wouldst be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, fly not from the Cross, but take it up willingly, wheresoever thou findest it, and follow Him. Never be of the number of those unhappy Christians whom the Apostle laments as enemies of the Cross of Christ, who, by indulging their passions and lusts, seek to bury the Cross out of sight.

FRIDAY AFTER THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

On preparing the Soul for the Holy Ghost.

1. Consider that when we celebrate the Christian solemnities, we ought not only to honour the mysteries we commemorate, and give praise and glory to the Author of all good for His benefits to His Church, but also to enter into the spirit of the solemnity, by aiming, as much as possible, at the dispositions of soul which are suitable to the mysteries we celebrate. And thus when we are preparing to keep the solemn feast of Pentecost, the day when the Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles, the great object of our devotion ought to be to prepare our souls for the Holy Ghost, that so we also may be favoured with His visit at this holy time, and may plentifully partake of His gifts and graces. O my soul, do thou aspire after this happiness (the greatest of any thou canst enjoy on this side of eternity), to have the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the living God, to come to thee to take full possession of thy interior, and to abide for ever with thee. Spare no pains in preparing a proper lodging for Him.

2. Consider how the Apostles prepared themselves for the Holy Ghost (Acts i. 14). "They were persevering," saith the Scripture, "with one mind in prayer;" and (Luke xxxiv. 53), "They were always in the temple, praising and blessing God." They prepared their souls for this heavenly Guest by a spiritual exercise of ten days; they spent the whole time from the Ascension of our Lord till Whitsunday in recollection and prayer. Retired as much as might be from the hurry and distractions of

a busy noisy world, they attended in silence to God and their souls. They were always in prayer in the temple of God, and by that means they prepared their souls to be the temple of God. Happy they who endeavour to make the like preparation! happy they who make it their practice to prepare themselves every year for the coming of the Holy Ghost by a spiritual retreat of some days. If thy circumstances do not allow thee this retirement, therein to breathe the purer air of devotion, and to aspire in a more suitable manner after the coming of the Spirit of God, at least wish for this happiness; and if thou canst do nothing more, at least, in the midst of thy other employments, call in thy thoughts as often as thou canst, and entertain thyself with thy God. Nothing will contribute more effectually to keep the Holy Ghost in thy soul, than this practice of aiming at inward recollection in the midst of thy works.

3. Consider that the great means to bring the Holy Ghost into our soul, is to invite Him by ardent desires and fervent prayer. Thus the Apostles obtained Him; and the Word of God in many places assures us, that this is the way for our obtaining all good, "that our Heavenly Father will give His good Spirit to all who ask Him" (Luke xi. 13), and that an ardent desire, a perfect hunger and thirst after this heavenly Spirit, the fountain of all justice, is the means to be filled both with Him and His gifts. "I wished," says the wise man (Wisdom vii. 7), "and understanding was given me; and I called upon God, and the spirit of Wisdom came upon me." See thou seek Him in this manner by fervent desires and prayer, and let it be with thy whole heart. In finding Him thou wilt find all good, for He is the overflowing Source of all good; without Him thou art nothing but misery and sin. Come, Divine Spirit, to my soul, that longs after Thee, and bring with Thee all Thy heavenly treasures. Do thou prepare Thyself a proper lodging in my heart, and then take full possession of it for time and eternity.

Conclusion. Spare no pains, by using all means in thy power to engage this Divine Spirit to come to visit thee and take up His abode with thee; frequently invite Him with the Veni, sancte Spiritus, a hymn that He Himself inspired. He willingly comes to those who sincerely and heartily invite Him.

WHITSUN-EVE.

On the Dispositions necessary for receiving the Holy Ghost.

1. Consider, that the soul which desires to receive the Holy Ghost must prepare a fitting lodging to entertain Him in; that is, a conscience and heart pure and clear from wilful sin. If any person of distinction were to honour us with a visit, we should

certainly take care to have our house clean, and to remove from the apartment designed for him whatsoever might offend his eyes; how much more, when we pretend to the honour and happiness of having the Spirit of God to abide with us and in us, ought we take care to have our inward house clean, and to remove from thence, by virtue of the sacrament of Penance, the filth of sin, infinitely odious in His eyes! Alas! whilst the soul is under the guilt of mortal sin, not removed by serious repentance and conversion to God, she is spiritually possessed by Satan; she is become a den of thieves, and carries as many devils about with her as there are unruly passions, to which she is enslaved. And can she expect a visit from the Holy Ghost without first ridding herself of such company? No; the Spirit of God can never reside in the same place with sin and Satan.

2. Consider these words of the wise man (Wisdom i. 4, 5), "Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins. For the holy spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful." And learn, hence, what sins have a more particular opposition to the visits of the Spirit of God, that by contrary dispositions thou mayest prepare thy soul for Him. He is the Spirit of love, union, peace, and charity, and therefore can never enter into a malicious soul. He is the Spirit of purity, and therefore cannot dwell in a body subject to carnal sins. He is the Spirit of sincerity and truth, and therefore will flee from all deceitful souls, that is, from all double-dealers and hypocrites, who seek Him not in simplicity of heart. Banish, then, far from thee all uncharitable animosities and rancour against thy neighbour, all wantonness and impurity, and all deceit and double-dealing, if thou hopest to have any share in the Spirit of God.

3. Consider that there is also an infinite opposition between the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God; they cannot both reside in the same breast. "We have received," says the Apostle (2 Cor. ii. 12), "not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God; the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive," saith our Lord (John xiv. 17). For as the love of the world and its friendship is the great enemy of the love of God (James iv. 4, and 1 John ii. 15), so the spirit of the world is the great adversary of the Spirit of God. The spirit of the world is a spirit of pride and vanity; it is selfish, it is fond of Mammon, "the god of this world" (2 Cor. iv. 5), and of all sensual pleasures, even to idolatry. The spirit of the world is a spirit of dissipation, ever forgetful of God and eternity, and full of disorderly affection for empty, vain, and perishable toys. And what room, then, can there be for the Spirit of God in such a soul? No, the Spirit of God will not come where He is not allowed

to be supreme Lord and Master. He will not admit of such worldly idols in His temple.

Conclusion. If thou wouldst effectually invite the Holy Ghost to take up His residence in thy soul, cleanse the heart thou designest for Him, not only from all wilful sin and affection to sin, but also from love of the world and the things of the world, and from every affection that shall presume to claim any part of thy heart, so as to hinder thee from giving it all to Him.

WHITSUNDAY.

On the coming down of the Holy Ghost.

1. Consider that on the feast of Pentecost, when the disciples were all assembled together, "suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak" (Acts ii. 2–4). Thus they received the promised Comforter with all His gifts and graces. Thus were they changed to other men. Weak and cowardly as they were before, they are now on a sudden courageous and perfect. They begin boldly to preach and to publish the faith and law of their crucified Lord, and bring thousands to embrace it. O heavenly Spirit, how wonderful are Thy operations! When wilt Thou work the like change in my soul! Christians, praise and bless your God for sending down in this manner His Holy Spirit upon His Church, and for all the wonders that He wrought in the first establishment of it. The Israelites observed the solemnity of Pentecost, as one of the three principal feasts of the year, because on that day the old law was published from Mount Sinai, in thunder and lightning. How much more ought Christians religiously to observe this solemnity, because on this day the new law of grace and love was published on Mount Sion, by the coming down of the Holy Ghost in tongues of fire!

2. Consider that the Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles in the shape of tongues, to signify that He came to make them fit preachers of His word, and to endow them with the gift of tongues, accompanied with heavenly wisdom and understanding of the mysteries of God and all the gospel truths, to the end that they might be enabled to teach and publish throughout the whole world the faith and law of Christ. And these tongues were of fire, to signify how His Divine Spirit sets those souls on fire in which

He abides, inflaming them with Divine love, consuming the dross of their earthly affections, inspiring them with earnest desires and endeavours to go forward from virtue to virtue like fire, which is always in motion, and carrying them upwards towards the God of gods in His heavenly Sion, just as flame is always ascending. O blessed fire, when shall I partake of Thy sacred flames? Come and take possession of my heart, consume all those bonds that tie it to the earth, and carry it up with Thee towards the heavenly furnace from whence Thou comest. Sweet Jesus, Thou hast said (St. Luke xii. 49), "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?" Cast this fire into my soul, that it may be kindled there!

3. Consider, that the coming of the Holy Ghost was not promised to the Apostles only, or to the first Christians, nor confined to the primitive ages, but was designed for a blessing to be entailed on the people of God throughout all ages. "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete (or Comforter), that He may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of truth" (St. John xiv. 16, 17). He was promised to be for ever with the pastors of God's Church, to guide them into all truth, in teaching God's people, and to be for ever with the sheep of Christ, to guide them into all truth, in their belief and life, and to be the source of all grace to their souls. Wherefore, though we are not now to look for His visible coming down in tongues of fire, we are nevertheless entitled, if we sincerely seek Him, to expect a share in His invisible graces and communications, and to aspire to the honour and happiness of being made His temples. Christians, what a happiness to have the Spirit of God in us! This we must all aim at, with our whole power; this is the great devotion of this holy time; this we must pray for at all times.

Conclude with this humble address of the Church to the Divine Spirit: "Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Thy love;" or that other of the sacred hymn: "Come, O Spirit, our Creator, visit these souls of Thine, and fill with Thy heavenly grace the breasts which Thou hast made." Frequently repeat these or the like invitations, and trust in the infinite goodness of Him who delights to be with the children of men, that He will come to thee and be thy guest.

WHITSUN MONDAY.

On the Happiness of having the Holy Ghost in the Soul.

1. Consider how happy a guest the soul entertains when she has in her the Holy Ghost. He is called in Scripture the Paraclete (a name that signifies both comforter and intercessor), from the consolations and graces He imparts to the soul, to sweeten

her crosses and labours in this mortal pilgrimage, and to help her to overcome all difficulties and opposition ; and from His soliciting for her by the spirit of prayer, which He inspires, teaching her to pray, and, as it were, praying with her, and in her. He is called by excellence the gift of the Most High, as being the greatest gift that God can give ; for what can He give greater than Himself? A gift, comprising all other gifts. He is called the living fountain, or fountain of living water, springing up to everlasting life, refreshing the inward man, assuaging the heat of concupiscence, extinguishing thirst after the things of this world, and watering the soul with a never-failing stream of grace. He is called a fire, from the bright flames of love with which He inflames the soul. And He is called the unction of the soul, from sweetly diffusing Himself through the soul, and giving strength and vigour to it. What can be wanting to a soul that entertains such a guest as this ! Does she not, in some measure, anticipate the joys of heaven, having within her the King of Heaven with all His graces?

2. Consider the happy fruits which the presence of the Holy Ghost produces in the soul, as they are reckoned up by St. Paul (Gal. v. 22, 23). 1. *Charity*, or the love of God, for His own sake, and the love of every neighbour in God and for God ; a fruit so remarkable in the first Christians upon their receiving the Holy Ghost, that through their love of God they had all "but one heart and one soul" (Acts iv. 32). 2. *Joy*, from the testimony of a good conscience, and the sense of the presence of this Divine guest, and the experience of His sweetness. 3. *Peace* with God, with our neighbour, and with ourselves ; a peace not granted to the wicked. 4. *Patience* in supporting crosses and adversities, which this heavenly Spirit makes light and easy. 5. *Benignity*, or kindness in relieving the distressed. 6. *Goodness*, or a willingness to impart all that is good to every neighbour. 7. *Longanimity*, or longsuffering and perseverance, without being wearied out with labour, in overcoming evil with good. 8. *Mildness* in restraining wrath and bearing injuries. 9. *Faith*, or fidelity to all our engagements, both to God and our neighbours. 10. *Modesty*, or moderation in all things, regulating every motion both of soul and body. 11. *Continency*, or temperance in restraining all irregular inclinations ; and, 12. *Chastity*, or purity in keeping both soul and body from the defilement of lust. What happy fruits are these ! How happy is that soul in which the Spirit of God produces all these fruits ! O my soul, bring in this heavenly Spirit into thy inward house, and entertain Him there, and all these fruits will be thine.

3. Consider that, as nothing can be more happy than to have the Holy Ghost in thy soul, so nothing can be more miserable than to be without this heavenly guest. Where the Spirit of God is not, there Satan is. Alas ! Can there be a greater misery

than to be possessed by Satan? "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ," says the Apostle (Rom. viii. 9), "he is none of His." If he be none of His, whose then must he be? or what share can he have in Christ or His kingdom? Oh! how true is that which the Church sings at this time, in her address to this Divine Spirit, sine tuo numine, nihil est in homine, nihil est innoxium. That without this Deity there is nothing in man, there is nothing that is innocent in man. Dread, then, the misery of being without Him, and flee from all those evils that may draw Him away from thee.

Conclude to neglect nothing that is in thy power, by which thou mayest procure to thy soul the happiness of being the temple of the living God; and of having the Holy Ghost there, not as a visitor only, but as taking up His abode in thee, both for time and eternity.

WHITSUN TUESDAY.

On the Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

1. Consider what precious gifts the Spirit of God brings with Him wherever He comes, and what treasures He imparts to the soul in which He takes up His abode. The prophet reckons up seven most admirable gifts of this Holy Spirit (Isa. xi. 2, 3), when he styles Him the "Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and of godliness, and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord." How precious indeed, how admirable, are these gifts! How rich is that soul which, by the coming of the Holy Ghost, is put in possession of these treasures! But what is this wisdom that the Holy Ghost imparts? Not the wisdom of this world, which is but folly in the sight of God, because it looks no further than the transitory enjoyments of this world, whilst it forgets God and eternity. Not the wisdom of the philosophers, who busy themselves in studying the course of the stars and the secrets of nature, and neglect to seek truth in its fountain; because they do not seriously apply themselves to know God and their own interior. But that wisdom, which alone deserves this glorious name, which consists in the knowledge and love of God, which tends continually to Him, and which seeks and finds Him in all things.

2. Consider how precious are those other gifts which the Spirit of God communicates to the soul. The gift of understanding, which opens the eyes of the soul to the light of God, and sets the truths of God in their proper light; which clearly discovers to the soul the shortness and vanity of temporal honours, riches, and pleasures, and convinceth her that nothing is truly great or worthy of her affection but that which is eternal. By the help of this light, the end of our creation, the dignity of an immortal soul, the

nature of our mortal pilgrimage, the four last things, and other Christian truths, sink deep into the soul, and have a wonderful influence upon the whole conduct of our lives. But then, as we are strangers and travellers here below, and are obliged to make the best of our way towards our true country, through difficulties and dangers, and with infinite opposition from strong and subtle enemies, the Spirit of God comes to our assistance, with two other admirable gifts, viz., the gift of counsel, to show us our way, to discover to us the snares and artifices of our enemies, and to guide us safe through all dangers; and the gift of fortitude, or heavenly courage and strength, to animate us to encounter all opposition from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to help us to come off with victory in all our conflicts. How happy is that traveller who has such a guide, such a counsellor, such a powerful helper and protector!

3. Consider the rest of the gifts which the Holy Ghost imparts to that soul in which He dwells; viz., the gift of knowledge, to instruct her in every virtue, every duty, and in every step she is to take in her way to God and a happy eternity. Then the gift of godliness or piety, which makes the soul quite in earnest and fervent in the service of God, so that she runs on with vigour and alacrity in the ways of His divine commandments. And lastly, the gift of the fear of the Lord, which the Scripture calls the beginning of wisdom, which restrains the soul from all that may offend God, and makes her fear His displeasure more than any other evil whatsoever. Can any treasures upon earth be comparable to these?

Conclusion. Set a high value upon these heavenly gifts, the least of which is worth more than all the world can give. How rich, then, is that soul which enjoys them all, by enjoying the Spirit of God, who is the source of all good, and who alone can impart such excellent gifts!

WHITSUN WEDNESDAY.

On the Means of keeping the Holy Ghost in the Soul.

1. Consider that the soul which has been favoured with a visit from the Holy Ghost, if she desire a continuance of that happiness, must take care to entertain Him in a proper manner. For if she take little or no notice of this heavenly guest; if she quickly turn her back upon Him to attend to every idle amusement that offers itself; if she do not frequently go in to wait upon Him in her inward house; if she love not to converse with Him there, she will quickly lose Him, she will drive Him away from her. He delights to be with them that delight to be with Him. He

expects a correspondence and return of love, and therefore withdraws Himself from such souls as take no care to entertain Him by recollection and love, but choose to give themselves up to dissipation of thought, and to squander that precious time, which they should spend in His company, in following empty phantoms and roving imaginations. My soul, is not this too often thy case? Amongst the many thoughts which successively occupy thy mind all the day long, how few there are that are anything to the purpose! how few that are fit to appear in presence of the Holy Ghost! How, then, canst thou expect He will stay with thee, if thou introduce such company as this into His lodging?

2. Consider that, as the Spirit of God will not dwell in a soul that does not attend on Him by recollection, so neither will He dwell in a soul that does not serve Him with purity of heart and affection. He will be sole master of the heart in which He resides: He will allow no partner there. He is a jealous lover who will bear no rival. A heart divided in its affections between the Creator and the creature, excludes the Holy Ghost: He will suffer no division; He claims the whole heart; He will have all or none. Christians, if you pretend to the happiness of being temples of the Holy Ghost, you must not admit of any idols in your souls. Now all disorderly affections are idols, inasmuch as by them you prefer the creature before the Creator; and all such affections are disorderly as captivate your hearts and take them off from God. Let the object of your love be ever so innocent in itself, it is no longer innocent when it is loved without a due subordination to the love of God. It becomes then impure, it defiles the heart, it chases away the Spirit of God, who will not dwell but in a clean heart.

3. Consider that, in order to keep the Holy Ghost in the soul, so that He may choose to dwell there as in His temple, we must not only keep this temple clean and undefiled—"for if any man violate the temple of God, him will God destroy" (1 Cor. iii. 17)—but we must also take care that it be made a house of prayer, as the house of God should be. We must frequently go into this temple, there to worship, in spirit and in truth. We must employ the three powers of the soul, the will, the memory, and the understanding, in frequently attending there upon their God in the way of mental prayer. In a word, the worship of God should be ever going on in this temple of His. This is the true way to engage Him to stay with us, and to make our souls the place of His rest for ever and ever.

Conclusion. Make use of all these means to entertain this sovereign guest, and establish Him in your soul. Give Him full possession of your memory and understanding, by recollection of thought and attention to His presence, and make Him the absolute master of your will by simplicity of intention, and purity of heart and affection, and He will be yours for ever.

WHITSUN THURSDAY.

On the Marks of the Holy Ghost's abiding in the Soul.

1. Consider that the surest way to judge whether the Holy Ghost abides in the soul or not, is by His fruits. The Spirit of God never lies idle; He is a fire that is always active, always in motion, always tending upwards. If we find nothing of this in our soul, we have reason to fear He is not there. His fruits are, charity, joy, peace, patience, &c. If we have none of these fruits, He is not with us. My soul, what is thy faith? Is it firm? Is it lively? Or is it not rather dull and dead? Does it show itself in the practice of thy life? Dost thou live by faith? What is thy hope? What is thy sense of the things of eternity? What thy esteem of spiritual things? What is thy devotion? What thy love for God and thy neighbour? What is thy desire of making daily progress in the way of God? By examining thyself upon these heads, it will be easy to judge whether the Holy Ghost be with thee or not. But especially, there is no surer mark of this Divine Spirit abiding in the soul, than a constant and fervent desire of loving God daily more and more, and of knowing and doing His holy will in all things. Dost thou find in thyself this earnest desire of loving and pleasing God? If so, the Spirit of God cannot be far from thee.

2. Consider that, as there is an infinite opposition between the Spirit of God and wilful sin, so one of the surest marks of the Holy Ghost's residing in the soul is a constant abhorrence of wilful sin, with a fixed determination of the soul never to admit for the future any such sin, upon any consideration whatsoever. My soul, what is thy disposition in this regard? Art thou fully determined to be faithful and loyal to thy God both in life and death? Dost thou resolutely renounce Satan and all his works both now and for ever? Is it thy constant resolution never to transgress the holy law and commandments of God for any worldly honour, interest, or pleasure, for any respect of person, for any fear or love of anything the world can give or take away, or for any other consideration? If this be thy sincere disposition and determination, the Holy Ghost is with thee; but if thou art not thus determined, there is no room for Him in thy soul, because Satan is there.

3. Consider that where the Holy Ghost comes, He "convinces the world of sin, of justice, and of judgment" (St. John xvi. 8). He convinces the soul of sin, inasmuch as He gives to the soul which He enlightens with His presence a sense of the enormity of sin, and of the multitude and greatness of her own sins in particular, a horror for that hellish monster, and a desire of abolishing it by penance. He discovers also many stains where the soul before

perceived none, and humbles her exceedingly by the conviction of her manifold guilt. My soul, dost thou experience in thyself this conviction of sin? The Holy Ghost by His coming convinces the soul also of the justice of Christ and of His heavenly law, of the beauty of virtue and holiness, and of the pleasure and happiness that is found in serving God in earnest. Art thou, my soul, practically convinced of all this? Dost thou really prefer this manna of heaven before the flesh-pots of Egypt? Again, the Holy Ghost, by His coming, convinces the soul of the wrong judgment she has hitherto made in following the world, and the prince of this world, who is already judged and condemned, and of the right judgment she ought to make of all things, in order to escape that judgment which God will otherwise one day make of her. Dost thou, my soul, find in thee this conviction of judgment? Is thy judgment rectified by the Holy Ghost in regard to truth and falsehood, time and eternity? Dost thou not still follow, by a perverse judgment, the prince of this world, rather than Jesus Christ; the maxims of worldlings, who are liars in their balances, rather than the practice of the saints, who weigh all things in the scales of the sanctuary? Will thy way of judging be able to stand the test of the last great trial?

Conclusion. Examine well by such marks as these whether the Spirit of God be with thee or no. If thou seem to find in thyself the marks of His presence, return Him humble thanks; but be not too secure, lest the artifices of thy self-love should deceive thee, or thy pride should drive Him away from thee. But if thou discover not in thyself the marks of His being with thee, bewail thy misery, and give thyself no rest, till, by penitential tears and fervent prayer, and all the other means by which the Holy Ghost is to be invited into the soul, thou hast grounds to hope that He has returned to thee.

WHITSUN FRIDAY.

On the Sacrament of Confirmation.

1. Consider that Confirmation is a sacrament, by which the faithful, if duly disposed, receive the Holy Ghost together with all His gifts and graces, in order to make them strong and perfect Christians. The Apostles were confirmed in a wonderful manner, by the Holy Ghost coming down visibly upon them on Whitsunday; but the rest of the faithful were to be confirmed by their ministry, and by that of their successors, the Bishops of God's Church; "receiving the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands and prayer" (Acts viii. 15, 17, 18, and chap. xix. 6). Give thanks to our Lord for this sacred institution, by means of which He perpetuates in His Church the mission of His Holy Spirit, and

the communication of His graces. What dignity, what happiness, to receive the Holy Ghost, the Lord of heaven and earth, and the inexhaustible Source of all grace! Wheresoever He comes He brings with Him His treasures, and He is infinitely liberal in imparting them. How much, then, are they their own enemies, who either neglect this means of receiving the Holy Ghost, or else come to it without due dispositions, and so lose the benefit of it; and even pervert it to their own damnation!

2. Consider that the peculiar grace of the sacrament of Confirmation is heavenly fortitude, that is to say, a spiritual strength, valour, and courage, in order to maintain the cause of God in our souls against the visible and invisible enemies of our faith. By this sacrament we are made soldiers of Christ; we give in our names to be enlisted in the service of this great King; we put ourselves under His banner, we receive the sacred mark of His cross on our forehead—His cross, which is the royal standard; we engage ourselves to fight His battles against the world, the flesh, and the devil; and we are equipped with proper arms for this warfare. How glorious is this title of soldier of Christ! How happy this service! What have we to apprehend, following Christ for our captain, and having His Holy Spirit with us, to guide, strengthen, encourage, and defend us? But oh the noble pay which this great King gives to His soldiers! He gives them nothing less than Himself, and that for eternity. "Be thou faithful unto death," saith He, "and I will give thee the crown of life" (Apoc. ii. 10).

3. Consider that, in the sacrament of Confirmation, the soul is, in a particular manner, dedicated and consecrated to God by the unction of His Holy Spirit, at the time the forehead is anointed with the holy Chrism. This Chrism is a compound of oil and balsam, solemnly consecrated by the bishops of God's Church on Maunday Thursday; kept in the Church with the utmost reverence, and only used in the consecration of such things as are most solemnly dedicated to God. So that the use of this holy oil in Confirmation is to give us to understand that, by this sacrament, we also are solemnly dedicated, sanctified, and consecrated to God, to be the temples of His Spirit; inasmuch as this visible unction and consecration of the body is the outward sign of the invisible unction and consecration of the soul by the Spirit of God, all the sacraments being outward signs of inward grace. Christians, what are your thoughts of this consecration which your souls have received? Have you hitherto considered yourselves as a people particularly dedicated to God and sanctified by the unction of His Spirit? Have you reflected that you have been sanctified, with the like consecration to that with which the altars and temples of God are solemnly dedicated to His service? Remember this at least for the future, and let your lives show that you are indeed the living temples of the living God.

Conclusion. Set a high value upon the grace of your Confirmation, and live up to the glorious character you there received. See you behave in every respect as becomes strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Christ. Beware of receiving so great a grace in vain.

WHITSUN SATURDAY.

On the Obligations of our Confirmation.

1. Consider that Confirmation is one of the three sacraments which imprint a character or spiritual mark on the soul. The nature of the character of Confirmation is such as to carry with it a dedication of the soul to the service of God, in quality of His soldiers; as the character of Baptism marks us out for the people of God, and the character of Holy Orders for the ministers of God. Hence it is that these three sacraments, having been once received, cannot be received again, because the character which they leave in the soul, which is the mark of its consecration to God, can never be lost, and, therefore, can never be repeated. But, then, these three sacraments carry also with them a strict obligation of living up to this character and consecration which they impart to the soul; and thus this sacrament of Confirmation obliges us to observe the discipline of the soldiers of Jesus Christ; to stand to our colours; to fight manfully the battles of our Lord; and rather to die than change sides, or go over to the enemy by wilful sin. This is the allegiance we owe to Christ, in quality of His soldiers; this we bind ourselves to when we receive the character of Confirmation.

2. Consider that the soldiers of this world profess a strict regard to the laws of their calling, and to the orders of their officers. They expose themselves to all kind of labours and dangers, in marches, in sieges, and in battles. They endure heat and cold, the inclemency of the weather and the seasons, they suffer hunger and thirst, watchings, and other hardships, to which their station of life exposes them, and all this for the trifling consideration of a small pay. What lessons are here for Christians, who, by the sacrament of Confirmation, have enlisted themselves soldiers of Christ! How much more ought they to embrace with courage all the labours and sufferings to which their spiritual warfare exposes them, especially as they fight under the banner of so great a King, in His presence and company, and for so great a reward. But, alas! the soldiers of this world will, I fear, one day rise up in judgment and condemn us, for having done and suffered so little in the warfare of Christ, in comparison with what they have done and suffered in the warfare of the world!

3. Consider that whatsoever is once dedicated and consecrated

to God ought to continue so for ever. And it is no less a crime than sacrilege to pervert any thing dedicated to Him, to profane uses. Therefore the soul which, by the sacrament of Confirmation, has been dedicated, sanctified, and consecrated to God, and which always carries about with her the mark of this consecration, is strictly obliged to be ever His, to be ever faithful, and to be ever holy; as a thing dedicated to His divine service, both in quality of His soldier and of His temple. Remember, Christians, that the character which the soul receives in this sacrament can never be effaced, either in this world or in the world to come; that, if we live up to the obligations of it, it will shine most brightly in our souls for eternity, and be no small addition to our everlasting glory and happiness. But, if we defile and profane this sacred mark of Christ by a sinful life, and, after these solemn engagements and the consecration of our soul to Him, become rebels and deserters, this same mark will appear in judgment against us; it will continue with us at the bar of divine justice, be with us for ever a mark of disgrace, a perpetual reproach among the damned, and an additional torture to the soul, for having once been dedicated to God, and having been so mad, so wretched, so wicked, as to apostatise from Him.

Conclusion. Bear always in mind the sacred character of thy Confirmation, as well as that of thy Baptism, that thou mayest live up to the obligations of them. Be not terrified at the prospect of the conflicts thou must sustain, or the crosses and hardships thou wilt have to go through in this warfare; "the grace of God and His peace, which surpasseth all understanding" (Phil. iv. 7), "will support thee, and never suffer thee to be tempted above thy strength" (1 Cor. x. 13), "but bring thee off with comfort and victory." In token of which, the Bishop, when he confirmed thee, gave thee a blow on the cheek, as a declaration of the adversities thou wast to sustain, but at the same time gave thee God's peace, that thou mightest understand that God would be with thee in them all and never leave thee.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

On the Blessed Trinity.

1. Consider, that on this day the Church sets before the eyes of our soul this principal mystery of the Christian faith, in which we believe one Eternal God in three several persons, which we call the mystery of the blessed Trinity, or of three in one; three persons in one God. This is the great object of the Christian's worship. This we ought always to adore. Every Sunday in the year might be called Trinity Sunday, because every Sunday is set

aside for the worship of the adorable Trinity, our Lord and our God. Yea, all our time belongs to Him, and the great sacrifice that is offered daily on millions of altars throughout the world, is principally designed to give sovereign adoration, homage, praise, and glory to the most holy Trinity. But, then, this day is more particularly appointed by the Church (which has just finished celebrating the other great festivals relating to the mysteries of our redemption and sanctification, wrought by the Three Divine Persons), in order to honour, in a more particular manner, the chief mystery of our religion. Come then, my soul, and all Christian souls with me this day, and let us bow down all our powers to adore this incomprehensible mystery. The more it is above our reach, the more worthy it is both of our faith and veneration.

2. Consider, more in particular, what our faith teaches us in relation to this mystery. We believe there is but one true and living God, and no more; eternal, incomprehensible, omnipotent, and infinite in all His attributes and perfections. In this one God we believe three distinct persons of the same substance and essence, and perfectly equal in age, in power, in wisdom, and in all perfections: the Father, who has no beginning, and proceeds from no one; the Son, who proceeds from the Father, by an eternal and ineffable generation, as His living Word and Wisdom, the brightness of His glory, and the most perfect image of His person; and the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, who proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son. We believe that these three are one, by having all three the same Godhead, that is, the same divine nature. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God; and yet they are not three Gods, but one God, one Lord, one Almighty in three several Persons. This is the true Christian Catholic belief of the mystery of the blessed Trinity essentially necessary for our eternal salvation. Let us, then, make frequent acts of faith concerning this sovereign truth; let us cast down every proud thought that offers to rebel against it; God Himself has taught it, who never can deceive nor be deceived.

3. Consider that not our faith alone, but our lives also, must render homage to this adorable mystery of the eternal Trinity. "What will it avail thee to discourse profoundly of the Trinity," saith the servant of God, "if, through want of humility, thou be disagreeable to the Trinity?" Humility of mind and heart is the most agreeable homage that man can pay to this infinite Majesty. "Heaven is my throne," saith He (Isa. lxvi. 1, 2), "and the earth My footstool—My hands made all these things—but to whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My words?" Learn also from the Epistle of this day, as part of the homage thou owest to the most sacred Trinity, to adore in silence the depth of the sacred counsels and judgments of God, and the wisdom of His unsearchable ways, and in all events to give glory to Him. "For of Him,

and by Him, and in Him, are all things; to Him be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. xi. 36).

Conclusion. Come daily before the throne of the eternal Trinity, with thy best homage of faith, love, and humility. Adore the almighty power of the Father, the infinite wisdom of the Son, and the incomprehensible goodness and love of the Holy Ghost. And give up the three powers of thy soul and thy whole being without reserve, to be ruled and disposed of for time and eternity by this infinite power, wisdom, and goodness.

MONDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY.

On the Figures of the Blessed Eucharist; and first, of the Paschal Lamb.

1. Consider that the Old Testament was a figure of the New, and that all the most remarkable events that are there recorded by the Spirit of God, have relation in the way of prophetic figures to Christ and His Church of the New Testament. Thus the Redemption, or deliverance of the children of Israel out of the slavery of Egypt, was a figure of the Redemption of man by Christ, from the bondage of Satan and sin; and the means that were then appointed to be used as a preparation for their deliverance, were a figure of what was to be afterwards done by our Redeemer for the deliverance of mankind from a far worse slavery. Now it was appointed (Exod. xii.) "that the children of Israel, the night before going out of Egypt, should in all their families offer an unspotted lamb in sacrifice, and that they should sprinkle their door-posts with the blood of the victim, as a sign for the destroying angel, who slew that night all the first-born of Egypt, to pass over their houses, and that they should eat the flesh of the lamb that same night, roasted at the fire, with unleavened bread and wild lettuce; having their loins girt, and shoes on their feet, and staves in their hands, in readiness to take the journey which they were immediately to begin, in consequence of the deliverance of that night." See, my soul, this illustrious figure; but now let us come to the application of it.

2. Consider, therefore, that this unspotted lamb, first offered in sacrifice and then eaten in a sacred and mysterious manner, was a lively figure of Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God, offered in sacrifice for our redemption from sin and hell; with the sprinkling of whose blood our souls are rescued from the power of Satan and from the second death, and whose sacred flesh we are commanded to eat in the divine mysteries, as an earnest of the share we have in Him and His sacrifice, as a sovereign means of communicating to our souls the fruit of our redemption, and the

grace purchased by our Redeemer; as a pledge of our eternal happiness, and as a preparation and viaticum for the great journey we are to make out of this Egypt of the world, to the true land of promise, the land of the living. Let us adore, praise, and give thanks to our Lord, for the wonders He has wrought in our favour, in these heavenly mysteries. Let us embrace with all affection this Lamb of God, immolated for our sins, this Christian Pasch, this victim of our redemption, this sacrifice of the new covenant, the covenant of life and love. Let us frequently approach these mysteries, but see it be with due dispositions.

3. Consider that the paschal lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread and wild lettuce; to signify the dispositions of soul with which we ought to come to the Christian passover. Christ is our paschal Lamb. "Therefore," says the Apostle (1 Cor. v. 8), "let us feast not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." So that purity of intention, uprightness, and simplicity of heart, and the sincere dispositions of a soul which desires to give herself up without reserve to her Redeemer, are signified by the unleavened bread with which the pasch was to be eaten; as the wholesome bitterness of true repentance and contrition for our sins, is signified by the bitter taste of the wild lettuce. And whereas it was also ordered, that in eating the paschal lamb they should have their loins girt up, shoes on their feet, and staves in their hands; we are to learn from these ceremonies, that if we would worthily approach the Lamb of God in the sacred mysteries, we must gird up the loins of our soul by a resolute restraint on our passions and lusts; and have our feet, that is, the affections of the soul, "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph. iv. 15), that is, with readiness of heart to follow in all things the rule of the Gospel, as the only way to true peace; and hold our staves in our hands, as pilgrims and travellers, not having any property or lasting dwelling here, but wholly bent on making the best of our way to our true country.

Conclude to frequent henceforward the great Christian passover of the most blessed Eucharist, with the dispositions of true Israelites, leaving Egypt, and marching towards the land of promise. Ever consider that it is the sacrifice and sacrament of your deliverance and redemption, and approach it with the devotion which this consideration requires; as the Israelites were commanded to solemnise, by the annual devotion of the sacrifice and sacrament of the paschal lamb, the memory of their redemption from the Egyptian bondage.

TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY.

Of the Manna and the Bread of Elias.

1. Consider that the manna, with which God fed the children of Israel for forty years in the wilderness, from their going out of Egypt till their entering the land of promise, was another prophetic emblem of the true bread of heaven, which we receive in the blessed Eucharist. "He commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven," says the Psalmist (lxxvii. 23–25). "And He rained down manna upon them to eat, and gave them the bread of heaven; man did eat the bread of angels." And yet this miraculous food, formed by angels and sent down from the clouds, and therefore called the bread of heaven and the bread of angels, was but a figure of that bread of life which we receive in the blessed sacrament; an illustrious figure indeed, but nothing in comparison with the reality. "Moses did not give you bread from heaven," says our Lord to the Jews, John vi. (for the manna only came down from the clouds), "but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this bread shall live for ever" (vers. 32, 51, 52, 58, 59). My soul, see thou embrace this living and life-giving bread.

2. Consider that the manna was the food upon which the people of God lived for forty years in the wilderness, but which ceased as soon as they came to eat of the fruits of the land of promise; to give us to understand that the bread of heaven which we here receive, veiled under the sacramental species, in the blessed Eucharist, is to be the food, nourishment, strength, and life of our souls, during our mortal pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world, till we come to the true land of promise, and there eat of the happy fruits of that blessed land of the living, by the beatific vision and contemplation of the Divinity; and that then the sacramental veils shall be removed, and we shall see and feed upon life and truth itself, face to face, for all eternity. Christians, if you hope to arrive one day at this happy land of promise, see you neglect not to gather for your journey the manna of heaven, by frequently and worthily approaching the bread of life, in the most holy sacrament: without this support you will perish in the wilderness,

and never reach your journey's end. But if you would truly relish this heavenly manna, you must take care not to let your taste be depraved, like the carnal Jews, by affection to the flesh-pots of Egypt.

3. Consider another figure of the heavenly food in that hearth-cake of the prophet Elias, with which he was fed by an angel in the wilderness, when he was flying from the persecution of Jezebel (1 Kings xix.) "In the strength of which food he walked forty days and forty nights unto the mount of God, Horeb" (ver. 8), where he was favoured with the vision of the Deity, as far as man is capable of seeing Him in this life. "Arise, eat," said the angel to him (ver. 7), "for thou hast yet a great way to go." All which expresses to us that retiring from the dangers and contagion of a wicked world, as from the impious Jezebel, in order to make our journey to the mountain of God, the mountain of eternity, we must have recourse to this bread of heaven for our support on the way, for we have yet a great way to go, being far off from that perfection which is required before we can come to the vision of God; and this barren wilderness through which we are to travel, affords us no proper food for our sustenance.

Conclusion. If thou aspire after the mountain of God and the happy vision of Him, diligently procure this bread of life, in the strength of which thou mayest walk during the forty days of thy pilgrimage to that blessed mountain. But remember that this bread was given only in the wilderness, that is, in retirement and solitude, and that the manna was not given until the people had left Egypt: and learn hence, that a spirit of recollection, and purifying the heart from affection to the Egypt of this world, are the best dispositions for the bread of heaven.

WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY.

Of other Figures of the Blessed Eucharist.

1. Consider that the sacrifice of Melchisedech (Gen. xiv. 18), in bread and wine, was another figure of the sacrifice and sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, as Melchisedech himself and his priesthood was an illustrious figure of Christ and His eternal priesthood, as we learn from Psalm cx. 4, and Heb. vii. And so likewise, in the law of Moses, all those sacrifices, commonly called peace-offerings, in which both priest and people were partakers of the victim, were also figures of Christ sacrificed for and received by us. In so many ways was the Divine Majesty pleased, both before and in the law, to show forth to us, not only the Sacrifice, in which His Son

should be both our priest and victim, but also the sacrament by which He should communicate His own flesh to us. Learn hence, my soul, what reverence, what devotion, thou owest to our tremendous mysteries, the very figures of which were so sacred and so venerable. It was a great crime, if any one who was not clean and pure presumed to approach these ancient sacrifices; what purity, then, is the Christian obliged to bring with him when he approaches the reality, of which these were but the shadows!

2. Consider that God appointed twelve loaves, made of fine flour, to stand always in His temple before the veil of the Sanctum Sanctorum, or inward sanctuary, placed upon a table, made of incorruptible wood, and overlaid with gold; and that the clearest frankincense should be put upon them, "that the bread might be for a memorial of the oblation of the Lord, by an everlasting covenant" (Let. xxiv. 5–8). These loaves, called the holy bread and the loaves of proposition or shewbread, were also a figure of the holy Eucharist. They always stood before the Lord in His temple, as an offering made to Him by His people, as a figure of that solemn offering which should be afterwards daily made, under the form of bread, in the Church of Christ: the clearest frankincense was put upon them, to denote the pure prayer and devotion with which this offering was to be made; and they stood before the veil with the golden candlestick and the altar of perfumes, to signify that the sovereign means to bring our souls to God, and to introduce us within the veil into His eternal sanctuary, would be the right use of the bread of life, which we have in the blessed Eucharist, joined with devout prayer and the lights and graces of the Spirit of God, signified by the seven branches of the golden candlestick.

3. Consider that the tree of life, planted in the midst of the earthly Paradise (Gen. ii. 9), "was also a figure of the blessed sacrament." The fruit of this tree had that excellent property, that, if sin had not banished us from that happy abode, we should have been maintained by it in constant vigour and health, and so should never have died. How well does the blessed Eucharist answer this noble figure! In it we here feed upon life itself in its very source; and by frequently and worthily approaching it, receive a plentiful supply of heavenly grace, for maintaining the vigour and health of the soul; that so we may never incur the second death, but may pass from life to life, from the life of grace to the life of glory, from life concealed under sacramental veils to life seen and enjoyed, without shadow or change for all eternity.

Conclusion. From all these ancient types and figures, so noble and so expressive of the blessed Eucharist and its fruits, raise thy thoughts and heart above this earth and all that is earthly, in the use of this heavenly sacrament. And assure thyself, that

this divine mystery, so many ways prefigured, both in the law of nature and in the law of Moses, must needs be something far superior to all types and figures.

CORPUS-CHRISTI DAY.

On the Institution of the Blessed Eucharist.

1. Consider how our Lord, "when His hour was now come that He should pass out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world," "He loved them unto the end," and gave them, in the last stage of His life, the most evident tokens of His boundless love; as well in what He endured for us in His passion and death, as in the institution of the eucharistic sacrifice and sacrament at His last supper; in which and by which He might not only always be with us to the end of the world, but might also unite Himself to us in such a manner as that we should abide in Him and He in us (John vi. 57). How wonderful are the ways of His divine love! How incomprehensible the riches of His bounty and goodness to us! What could He give us more than when He gives us Himself? What could He do more to testify His affection for us? Is it possible, my soul, we should ever forget or be ungrateful to such a Lover?

2. Consider the infinite treasures which our Lord has bequeathed to us in these divine mysteries; which contain an inexhaustible source of grace, the living bread, the food, the nourishment, the strength, and the life of our souls, the manna of heaven, the tree of life, spirit, truth, and life itself, the remedy of all our evils, the most powerful medicine for all our diseases; the sovereign antidote against the poison of the infernal serpent, the comfort of our banishment, the support of our pilgrimage, the price of our ransom, the earnest of our eternal salvation, the great sacrifice and victim of the New Testament, by means of which we are enabled to give worthy praise, adoration, and homage to God; to return Him acceptable thanks, and to apply daily to our souls all the fruits of the death and passion of the Son of God, as well for the remission of our sins, as for obtaining all good through Him, both for time and eternity. In a word, He has bequeathed to us in these heavenly mysteries His own sacred body and blood, together with His soul and divinity, so rich a present that heaven can give nothing greater.

3. Consider what could be the motive that induced our Lord to communicate Himself and all His treasures to us, in this wonderful manner, by the institution of the blessed Eucharist! It was no other than His own pure goodness and love. It was that by this means He might always be with us, "for His delight is to be with the children of men" (Prov. viii. 31). It was that He might unite us to Himself, that He might abide in us and

we in Him. Who ever heard of such love as this! But what didst Thou see in me, dearest Lord, that could claim Thy love, and such love—in me, a poor worm of the earth, and, what is infinitely worse, a most ungrateful sinner, a traitor to Thee and to Thy Father, and who have so often crucified Thee by my repeated crimes? O ye Heavens, be astonished at this prodigy of my Saviour's bounty and love for me, and of my wickedness and ingratitude in not making Him a better return! Let us begin now at least to be wholly His; let nothing henceforward be capable of separating us any more from this divine Lover.

Conclusion. Be ever thankful for this unspeakable benefit of the institution of the blessed sacrament and sacrifice of the altar. Join with the Church in celebrating this octave with extraordinary devotion, in acknowledgment of thy Saviour's goodness and love, which He has shown to us in these mysteries, and make the best amends thou art able, by thy diligence in this devotion, for the many affronts, abuses, and sacrileges to which thy Saviour has here exposed Himself for love of thee.

FRIDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

On the Mysteries contained in the Blessed Eucharist.

1. Consider that all the sacraments are sacred and mysterious signs of divine grace and of heavenly truths, which are concealed under these outward appearances, and through them are conveyed to our souls; but that the blessed Eucharist in particular, as it is the greatest of all the sacraments, contains more and greater mysteries than any of the rest. Here our Lord gives Himself to us in quality of our food; that as sin and death and all our miseries came to us originally by eating of the forbidden fruit, so grace and life and all our good should come to us by eating of the fruit of the tree of life, which He has left us under the form of bread, as being the most expressive to us both of His real and His mystical body. "He is the living bread that came down from heaven, for the life of the world" (John vi. 51, 52). And His body has all the qualities of bread in regard to our souls, inasmuch as it is the true food and nourishment of them unto life everlasting. Therefore this form of bread is the most proper to express to us the living bread it contains, namely, the true and real body of Christ, and its qualities and effects, in being the food, nourishment, strength, and life of our souls; and at the same time is also most proper to express to us the mystical body of Christ, which is His Church, and the union of concord and charity, by which all its members, like so many grains of corn,

are so closely united as one bread, by means of the holy communion, according to that of St. Paul (1 Cor. x. 17): "We being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread."

2. Consider that in this most holy sacrament and sacrifice, the death and passion of the Son of God is, in a lively manner, represented to us, and all the mysteries of our redemption are solemnly celebrated; inasmuch as, by the separate consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, the true Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, presents Himself to His Father upon our altars under the figure of death, that is, under the sacramental veils, which represent His body as delivered up, broken, and slain for us, and His blood as shed for us. So that here the whole passion and death of Christ is solemnly acted as a most sacred tragedy, by Himself in person; here that death which is the fountain of all our good, is shown forth in such a manner as not only to be kept in our remembrance, but also to live in us, and bring forth in us the fruit of life; here the blood of Christ most powerfully pleads and intercedes for us. Here, in fine, not only the passion and death, but also the victorious resurrection and triumphant ascension, of our crucified King are solemnly commemorated. Admire, O my soul, and adore these divine mysteries!

3. Consider that partaking of the body and blood of Christ, under the sacramental veils, is no less mysterious, in the many benefits it ensures to us, with relation to our redemption and salvation. For here we receive an assurance of the share we have in our Redeemer and in the sacrifice of His cross. Here we are mystically incorporated in Him, and are made partakers of His Spirit. Here we are admitted to that blood, which is the seal of the new covenant, importing the remission of our sins and our reconciliation with God, through the death of His Son; together with admittance to all graces and blessings through Him. Here, in fine, we have a most certain pledge of a happy resurrection and everlasting life, and of eternal enjoyment in our blessed country, of Him who thus lovingly gives Himself to us in this place of banishment.

Conclude ever to approach with all reverence and love these mysteries so full of majesty and love. The high-priest, in the Old Testament, was but once a year allowed to enter into the inner sanctuary, called the Holy of Holies, and then not without divers purifications and sacrifices and a solemn fast of all Israel. See then, how pure, how holy, thou oughtest to be, who art so often admitted, by means of this heavenly sacrament, into the sanctuary of the New Testament, that is, to these divine mysteries, sanctified by the presence of Jesus Christ Himself, the true Holy of Holies, of which that Jewish sanctuary was but a shadow.

SATURDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS-CHRISTI.

On the real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist.

1. Consider that what, above all things, renders these divine mysteries venerable to a Christian, and principally calls for his faith and devotion, is the real presence of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, and of all He contains both as God and as man, in the blessed Eucharist. The reality of this presence we learn from the words of truth itself, so often repeated in the Holy Scripture, and from the express declaration of the Church of God, against which the gates of hell can never prevail. Upon these two pillars of truth, the Word of God and the Church of God, the humble and faithful Christian securely rests. Bow thyself down then, my soul, to adore this sacred truth. Let no proud thought of opposition arise in thee against this great mystery. Captivate thy understanding to the obedience of faith. Remember that the glory and merit of faith is to believe what thou canst not see; that the Almighty can do infinitely more than thou canst comprehend; and that no effort of mercy, bounty, and love can be too great for Him who died for love of thee.

2. Consider in how many ways this Lord, who is both our Creator and our Redeemer, communicates Himself to us. He came down from heaven, and took our flesh and blood, in order to make us partakers of His divinity, and to carry us up to heaven. He offered up that flesh and blood upon the cross, as a sacrifice for us, to deliver us from sin and hell, and to purchase mercy, grace, and salvation for us. And He gives us here verily and indeed the same flesh and blood, to be our food, comfort, and support in our pilgrimage, till He brings us, by virtue of that food, to our true country, where He will give Himself to us for all eternity. Thus, in His incarnation and birth, He has made Himself our companion; in His passion and death, the price of our ransom; in the banquet of His last supper, our food and nourishment; and in His heavenly kingdom, our eternal reward. What return shall we be able to make Him for giving Himself in so many ways to us! Alas! dear Lord, we have nothing to give but what is Thine already; we have nothing to give that is worthy of Thee. But be pleased to accept of all that our poverty can afford; and let this being of ours be for ever dedicated to Thy love as a whole burnt-offering, to lie always upon Thy altar, there burning and consuming with that divine fire which Thou camest to cast upon earth, and which Thou so much desirest should be enkindled.

3. Consider what ought to be our sentiments in coming to these divine mysteries, in consequence of our faith in the real presence of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, in this blessed sacrament. Oh! what reverential awe ought we to bring with us when we draw near so tremendous a Majesty, in whose sight the whole creation is a mere nothing! What fear and dread when we enter into His sanctuary, who is infinitely pure and holy, who sees all our guilt, and cannot endure iniquity! What sentiments of humility, when we reflect what He is and what we are! What sorrow and contrition for all our past treasons and offences against this infinite goodness! What sentiments of gratitude for His giving us here His own self, in this wonderful manner! What desires of returning Him love for love! Oh! how would a Christian be affected, if he visibly and evidently saw His God before Him, in approaching this blessed sacrament! A lively faith, which apprehends things invisible as if they were visible, would produce the like affections. Give us, sweet Jesus, this lively faith.

Conclusion. Ever admire and adore the incomprehensible ways by which God is pleased to communicate Himself to us. Resolve to correspond, in the best manner you are able, with the riches of His bounty and goodness, by approaching these divine mysteries with faith, with fear, and with love.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

On Christ's inviting us to this heavenly Banquet.

1. Consider those words of the parable of this day's Gospel: "A certain man made a great supper and invited many" (Luke xiv. 16), and reflect how our Lord has indeed prepared a great banquet for us, in the institution of the blessed sacrament, and has invited us all to it. "O sacred banquet," says the Church, in the anthem used during this octave, "in which Christ is received, the memory of His passion is kept up, the soul is filled with grace, and a pledge is given us of the glory to come!" A happy banquet, in which we feed upon the bread of heaven, and drink at the very source of the fountain of life. To this heavenly banquet the Son of God invites all the faithful, in the most loving manner. "Come to Me," says He, "all you that labour, and are burthened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi. 28). Ah! Christians, we all labour and lie under many and very heavy burthens, from the sins and miseries to which we are exposed during our mortal pilgrimage; and in this heavenly banquet we come to Christ to be refreshed, nourished, and strengthened by Him. O

sweet invitation! O happy call to the source of grace here and of endless glory hereafter!

2. Consider how much our Lord is offended by all such as refuse to correspond to His loving invitation and to come to His banquet. He has prepared it out of pure love, that we may feast with Him and He with us. He desires, out of pure love, to impart Himself and all His goods to us; and therefore justly resents being slighted by us, and our preferring the farm, the oxen, the wife, in a word, the world and the things of the world, before Him and His banquet. Christians, if you have any love for Christ, surely you must be desirous of going to Him, and entertaining yourselves with Him in this great banquet of love. Love tends to union, and here it is that you are to be in so perfect a manner united to Him, as to abide in Him and live by Him. If you have any love for yourselves and for your own souls, you must gladly go to this banquet, in which you will find all your good, and all that can make you truly happy both here and hereafter.

3. Consider that in staying away from Christ in the blessed sacrament, we not only neglect His invitation and slight His love, but also break through His ordinance and violate His commandment. The very institution of these heavenly mysteries to be the support of our spiritual life for the time of our mortality, implies a commandment for us to approach them and to make use of them. We should be guilty of self-murder, if we suffered the body to perish by refusing to take that food which God has appointed for its sustenance; and are we not equally guilty of murdering our souls, if we suffer them to starve for want of the food and sustenance which our Lord has allotted them in this life-giving banquet? Truth itself assures us (John vi. 54) that without this heavenly food "we have no life in us;" as, then, we are most strictly bound to maintain the life of our souls, we are most strictly bound to use this food of life; and it is no less certain death to stay away from this blessed sacrament, than it is to come to it unworthily.

Conclude, my soul, to correspond henceforward with the loving invitation of thy dear Redeemer, by frequent and worthy communion. Remember that the blessed sacrament is named our daily bread in that prayer which our Lord Himself has taught us. Happy should we be if we lived in such purity and holiness as to be daily admitted, like the primitive Christians, to this bread of heaven! Let us do our best so to live, so to behave in every respect, that we may at least very often approach this heavenly table and there feast ourselves with Jesus Christ!

MONDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

On the excellent Fruits of this Divine Banquet.

1. Consider that in all the sacraments the worthy receiver is made partaker of divine grace, which is conveyed to the soul through those heavenly channels; but the sacrament of the Eucharist has this advantage above the rest, that it imparts to the soul the very source itself from which all graces flow, by giving us Jesus Christ Himself, the Author of all grace, His own body, His blood, His soul and divinity; and therefore it is the most excellent of all the sacraments, and the most plentiful in its fruits. Amongst which fruits, that which is peculiar to this divine sacrament is, that it has the like qualities and properties with regard to the soul that our corporal food has with regard to the body, according to that of our Saviour (John vi.): "The bread that I will give, is My flesh for the life of the world;" and again, "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed;" inasmuch as this bread supports our spiritual life, by the abundance of graces which it furnishes for the food and nourishment of our souls, it repairs the daily decay we are liable to from our natural infirmity and corruption, and adds new strength and vigour to carry us on happily in our journey towards heaven. This is that "bread that strengthens the heart of man" (Ps. ciii. 15), that gives us force against temptation, that weakens our passions and concupiscences, that enables us to grow daily in virtue, and to run forward in the way of the divine commandments, till we arrive at the mountain of God, that is, at the very perfection of a Christian life.

2. Consider that this heavenly sacrament not only feeds, nourishes, and strengthens the soul, in order to maintain in us the life of grace here and bring us to the life of glory hereafter; but also tends, in a particular manner, to unite us by a union of love with our sovereign good, and to transform us into Christ Himself. "He that eateth My flesh," said our Lord (John vi. 57), "and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." The corporal food which we take, by means of our natural heat and digestion, is changed into our bodily substance; but this spiritual food is not changed into us, but by its heavenly heat changes us into itself. "Christ is the food of them that are grown up," saith St. Augustine; "grow thou up, and thou shalt feed on Him; yet thou shalt not change Him into thyself, but thou shalt be changed into Him." "Our God is a consuming fire," says the Apostle

(Heb. xii. 29). Fire has a power of transforming all things into itself, by communicating its nature and properties to such things as it lays hold of; how much more shall this bright flame, which communicates itself to us by the sacred mysteries, set our souls on fire with divine love, and change us into our Beloved!

3. Consider that the best disposition for this happy transformation and blessed union of love, is to approach this divine sacrament with an entire resignation of ourselves and of our whole being into the hands of Him whom we are going to receive. "As I willingly offered Myself to God My Father for thy sins," saith the Beloved (1. iv. c. 8, of the "Following of Christ"), "with My hands stretched out upon the cross, and My body naked, so that nothing remained in Me which was not turned into a sacrifice to appease the divine wrath; even so must thou willingly offer thyself daily to Me in the mass (and communion), together with all thy powers and affections, as heartily as thou art able, for a pure and holy oblation. What do I require more of thee, than that thou endeavour to resign thyself entirely to Me? Whatsoever thou givest besides thyself, I shall not regard; for I seek not thy gift, but thyself. As it would not suffice thee if thou hadst all things but Me, so neither can it please Me, whatever thou givest, so long as thou offerest not thyself. Offer thyself to Me, and give thy whole self for God, and thy offering will be accepted. Behold I offered My whole self to the Father for thee, and have given My body and blood for thy food, that I might be all thine, and thou mightest be always Mine; but if thou wilt stand upon thyself, and wilt not offer thyself freely to My will, thy offering is not perfect; nor will there be an entire union between us. My sentence stands firm: 'Except a man give up all, he cannot be My disciple.' If therefore thou desirest to be My disciple, give thyself up to Me, with all thy affections."

Conclusion. Give all for all, if thou hopest to relish the fruits of this heavenly sacrament, that is, give thy whole self without reserve to Him who gives His whole self to thee. Let this oblation of thyself to God ever go before, accompany, and follow thy communion; there can be no better devotion.

TUESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

On the dispositions we ought to bring to the Holy Communion.

1. Consider these words of St. Paul (1 Cor. xi. 28): "Let a man prove himself, that is, let him try and examine himself, by looking well into the state of his conscience, and setting all right

in his interior, and so eat of that bread, &c., lest otherwise approaching it unworthily, he make himself guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord (ver. 27), and receive his own judgment and condemnation, not discerning the body of the Lord" (ver. 29); so that the first and most essential disposition to a worthy communion is purity of conscience, at least from all mortal sin. Whosoever presumes to approach purity itself, in these sacred mysteries, must be clean and pure—Sancta Sanctis, Holy things for them that are holy. "God will be sanctified in them that approach Him" (Lev. x. 3), and will execute justice and judgment on them that defile and profane His sanctuary, by entering in thither, and receiving the holy of holies with a soul polluted with wilful sin. My God, keep me from being ever so miserable!

2. Consider how great is the guilt of a communion made without this disposition of purity of conscience. It is a most grievous sacrilege, by profaning the most holy of all the sacraments. It is a most heinous injury and affront offered to our Lord Himself in person, by bringing Him into a polluted habitation. A soul under the guilt of mortal sin is possessed by devils; the unworthy communicant therefore introduces the Lord of glory into a den of unclean spirits. He imitates the treason of Judas, by betraying Him, as much as lies in him, to His enemies. He lays violent hands on our Lord, like the Jews; and, like them, is guilty of the body and blood of Christ. We should have a horror for the wretch who, by wilful murder, had been guilty of innocent blood, though it were but of the meanest person living; what, then, ought we to think of ourselves if, by an unworthy communion, we should be guilty of the blood of the Son of God Himself? Would not such a crime as this cry to Heaven for vengeance? Would it not very much darken the understanding and harden the heart? Would it not put the soul even in the broad road of final impenitence? It would be, according to the Apostle, receiving judgment, that is, damnation to ourselves. Ah, what penance, what floods of tears, would be required to expiate so great a guilt!

3. Consider that a soul which approaches the holy of holies in the sacred mysteries, ought not to content herself with being pure from mortal sin, and for that end preparing herself by contrition and confession; but ought also, as much as possible, to purify herself from all affection to venial sin, and all habits of sin which, when fully deliberate, do a deal of mischief to the soul, and, in particular, hinder her very much from being sensible of the heavenly sweetness and excellent fruits of this divine sacrament. Ah! Christians, could we but see those spots, those stains, that leprosy, which these habits of lies of excuse, of anger and impatience, of vanity, of curiosity, of indulging sensuality in eating, drinking, &c., bring upon the soul, we should be

sensible how unfit they make us for the embraces of our Heavenly Spouse, "who is beautiful above the sons of men" (Ps. xliv. 3).

Conclusion. Ever look to the state of thy conscience, and purify it from all known and deliberate sin, whenever thou art preparing thy soul for Jesus Christ. Let thy intention also be pure, by having no other view in thy communion but His glory and thy salvation; and thy affections pure from all inordinate love of creatures, when thou presentest thyself at His table, and thou shalt not fail to be a welcome guest.

WEDNESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

On devotion before Communion.

1. Consider that the soul which desires to prepare a fit abode for Jesus Christ, whom she is to receive in the blessed sacrament, must not only drive out Satan and rid her inward house of the dirt and filth of sin, but must also procure the proper ornaments and furniture of virtue and devotion to deck out herself and her lodging, that it may be agreeable to the great King who comes to visit her. "The work is great," said David (1 Paralip. xxix. 1): "for a house is preparing not for man but for God;" yea rather, in our case, for Him who is both God and man. The groundwork of this preparation must be a lively faith and a serious consideration of the work we are about, who it is we are to receive, how great and glorious, how pure and holy, He is. And also who we are that are going to receive Him, how wretched and unworthy! This consideration must be accompanied or followed with earnest prayer; to beg of His infinite Majesty that, since He knows our great poverty and inability to prepare Him a fit lodging, He would prepare one for Himself, by sending beforehand those graces and virtues and that fervour of devotion which may fit our souls for Him.

2. Consider that the devotion which we ought to bring with us to this blessed sacrament, consists, in the first place, in a most profound humility and awful reverence for these tremendous mysteries, sanctified by the real presence of Jesus Christ Himself, the Lord of glory and the fountain of all sanctity. Oh! how ought we to annihilate ourselves in the sight of this great Lord and Maker of heaven and earth! How ought we to fear and tremble, in consideration of our manifold treasons against Him and our base unworthiness! With what profound reverence ought we to approach the holy of holies, who lies here concealed under the sacramental veils! But then, lest this fear and reverence go so far as to drive us away from this fountain of life,

it must be qualified with a humble confidence in the infinite goodness and mercy of Him who invites us to come, and who is ever ready to receive with open arms His prodigal children, when they leave the husks of swine and return to Him with a true sense of their unworthiness. Blessed be His holy Name for evermore!

3. Consider that as nothing but pure love brings our Lord to us in this divine sacrament, so the devotion He principally expects of us, when we approach Him, is a return of love. Whichever way we consider these sacred mysteries, we shall find that all things call for our love, and indispensably oblige us to consecrate our whole heart with all its affections to this most loving Lord. His death and passion, endured for the love of us, which we here commemorate; an incomprehensible mystery of love, which will astonish men and angels to all eternity; the wonders He has wrought in this heavenly sacrament, that He might make Himself our food and unite us to Himself; the inestimable treasure He imparts to us; the pledge He gives us of our redemption and of our everlasting salvation,—all concur to show forth His love for us, and to claim a return of our whole heart. My soul, can we see so much love on His part, and not be inflamed with a desire of loving Him with all our power? Can we remain cold when we approach so great a fire! Remember thou art going to thy sovereign good, to the source of all grace, to the fountain of life; go then with hunger and thirst, with an ardent desire to this great banquet of love, where thou art to feed upon thy lover Himself, and He will not fail to fill thee with all that is good.

Conclusion. Exercise thyself always before communion in acts of faith, reverence, and humility; in acts of hope and confidence in thy Saviour; in acts of divine love, and in ardent desires after Him, accompanied with a grateful remembrance of the love He has shown thee in dying for thee, and in giving Himself to thee; and the more thou bringest with thee of this preparation and devotion, which enlarges as it were the vessels of thy heart, the more plentifully wilt thou draw of the waters of divine grace from this fountain of life.

THURSDAY THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

On devotion after Communion.

1. Consider that, as the soul must prepare to receive Jesus Christ by proper devotion before communion, so she must also take care to entertain Him in a proper manner after she has received Him, and to make good use of that favourable time

(most happy to her above all times, if well employed) during which she has Him really present with her, both in His divine and human nature, that is, both as God and man. It would be a gross affront after being favoured with a visit from the King of Heaven, desiring to feast Himself with us, and bringing His treasures with Him to enrich our souls, if we should turn our back immediately upon Him, and take no further notice of Him. The meanest of our friends would have reason to resent so contemptuous a usage, how much more so great a Lord! See, my soul, if the little care thou hast taken, to manage to the best advantage those happy minutes in which thou hast Jesus Christ with thee, by proper devotion after communion, be not the true cause why thou hast reaped so little fruit from thy repeated communions, which otherwise might long since have made thee a saint. Repent and amend.

2. Consider what this devotion is with which we are to entertain our Lord after receiving Him. First, we are to welcome Him by faith, hope, and love: by lively faith in all His mysteries; but, in particular, that we have really with us, in this blessed sacrament, Him who is our Maker and our Redeemer, infinite in majesty and infinite in mercy, and who brings with Him all the treasures of heaven to enrich us; by a firm hope that He will now, by this blood of the covenant, take full possession of our souls and make them His, both for time and eternity; by an ardent love, aspiring with all our power and affection to an eternal union with our Beloved, whom we here receive. "I have found Him whom my soul loveth; I will hold Him fast, and will never let Him go." In the next place, we ought to cast ourselves down at His feet, and pay Him the best homage and adoration we are capable of, bringing all the powers of our soul before Him, and obliging them to bow down and worship Him. But as all this ought to be accompanied with a lively sense of our unworthiness, we must also take this opportunity of making a humble confession, like Magdalene, of all our treasons, at His feet, craving His mercy for what is past, and the grace of a change of heart and life for the time to come.

3. Consider that, after these first homages, the soul must, for some time following communion, keep close to our Lord, and give space for His grace to penetrate more and more and bring forth its proper fruit. For this end she must entertain Him with praise and thanksgiving, inviting all heaven and earth, all angels and saints, together with the whole creation, to join with her in His praises, and wishing she had the hearts and tongues of all His creatures, that she might employ them in loving and glorifying Him in return for the wonders of His love and goodness to her. She must also offer herself and all she has, without reserve, into His hands; that she may be for ever His, and that her whole being may be made as a holocaust or whole burnt-offering for His

glory. In fine, she must remember that she is now before the throne of grace, and that the Lord, whom she has with her, carries with Him all the treasures of divine grace; and therefore she must lay before Him all her wants and spiritual necessities, and beg of Him plentiful supplies of grace, both for herself and for the whole Church.

Conclude, O my soul, to entertain thy Saviour in this manner, as often as thou shalt receive Him in the divine mysteries. Take care also to be more than ordinarily recollected on the whole day following thy communion, and to keep a great guard upon thyself, lest the enemy, who knows what a treasure thou hast received, and is therefore most busy about thee on this occasion, in hopes of robbing thee of it, should fling some stumblingblock in thy way, to make thee fall into sin either by passion or concupiscence, that so, by this means, he may drive Christ away from thee, and get possession of thy soul.

N.B.—That as often as the Octave of Corpus Christi shall fall before the thirteenth day of the month of June, the meditations that shall then be wanting in this place are to be taken out of the number of those that are marked for the month of February, which were omitted at that time, to give place to the meditations for Lent.

JUNE 14.

Of the Blessed Eucharist as a Sacrifice.

1. Consider that the blessed Eucharist is not only a sacrament, in which we receive the body and blood of Christ, for the food and nourishment of our souls, but is also a sacrifice, in which this same body and blood is offered to God, in remembrance of His death and passion, for the honour and glory of God, in thanksgiving for all His benefits, to obtain pardon for our sins, and help in all our necessities. Sacrifice is a sovereign act of religious worship, due to God alone, inasmuch as it testifies by the oblation made to Him that He is the sovereign Lord of all things, the Master of life and death, our first beginning and last end. Now, from the beginning of the world, the children of God were accustomed to offer sacrifice to Him, and this was the solemn worship in which they met together, to join in paying their homage and adoration to Him. In the old law a great variety of these sacrifices was prescribed, of burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, peace-offerings, &c., but all these were but figures and imperfect shadows of the great sacrifice which was reserved for the law of grace, and which we celebrate in the blessed Eucharist—a sacrifice in which the Son of God Himself is both priest and victim.

2. Consider that, as the law of Moses was to give way to the law of Christ, of which it was a figure, and the priesthood of the

sons of Aaron was to yield to Him who is a Priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech, so all these ancient sacrifices of the old law, which were but figures and shadows, were to make way for the new sacrifice of Christ's institution, which is no other than that of His own body and blood, not as prefigured by the blood of calves or lambs, but as exhibited in truth, once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross, daily to the end of the world in an unbloody manner on our altars under the forms of bread and wine, agreeably to the priesthood and sacrifice of Melchisedech (Gen. xiv. 18). Hence, in the thirty-ninth Psalm, spoken in the person of Christ, the sacrifice of His own body is substituted for all those ancient victims, in these words: "Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not desire, but Thou hast fitted a body to me" (for so St. Paul reads it, Heb. x. 5). "Burnt-offering and sin-offering Thou didst not require, then said I, behold, I come." And this new sacrifice of the Christian Church, this clean-offering, which should be "offered in every place among the Gentiles," is foretold (Mal. i. 11), and there accepted by the Lord, at the same time that He declares He will no more receive the Jewish sacrifices (ver. 10).

3. Consider that this great sacrifice of the Eucharist essentially consists in the consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, and in offering up the same body and blood to God, by the ministry of the priest, as a perpetual memorial of the sacrifice of the cross, and a continuation of the same to the end of the world. For, by the separate consecration of the bread into the body of Christ, and of the wine into His blood, performed by the priest in the name and person of Christ, our great High-Priest, Christ Jesus, presents Himself to His Father upon our altars, as slain for us, and His blood as shed for us, and under this figure of death offers up His own body and blood, to answer all the ends and intentions for which we ought to offer sacrifice to God. Not as if there were any deficiency or insufficiency in His sacrifice of the cross, by which He completely redeemed us and opened to us the fountain of mercy, grace, and salvation; but that we might have in this Eucharistic sacrifice a standing memorial of our redemption, a daily means of applying the fruit of it to our souls, a daily communion one with another, by joining in the solemn worship of sacrifice, as the children of God had always done from the beginning, and daily means of uniting ourselves in these mysteries with our High-Priest and Victim, Christ Jesus, and of coming to God with Him and through Him.

Conclusion. Frequent daily this means of salvation, which our Lord has prepared for us in the Eucharistic sacrifice; admire and adore the wonders of the power and goodness of God manifested to us therein, and resolve to correspond with them by faith, hope, and love.

JUNE 15.

On the excellence of the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

1. Consider that the excellence and dignity of a sacrifice is to be estimated by the excellence and dignity of the victim that is offered, of the priest who makes the offering, and of the ends for which the oblation is made. Now all these concur to recommend in the highest degree the sacrifice of the blessed Eucharist, which in substance is the same with that which the Son of God offered upon the cross, because both the victim is the same and the chief priest is the same, and both the one and the other answer the same ends, though in a different manner. See then, my soul, and admire the excellence of this great sacrifice which is offered on our altars—a sacrifice in which the whole passion and death of Jesus Christ is solemnly acted by Himself in person, in such manner as to be Himself both priest and victim, the sacrificer and the sacrifice. Christ Jesus, the Son of God, was the great High-Priest of God and men, who solemnly offered His own body and blood upon the cross, a sacrifice to God for all mankind; His body and blood was the victim by which we were redeemed. And this same great High-Priest of God and man officiates also in person in the sacrifice of the altar, and there offers up the same victim of His body and blood to His Heavenly Father in our behalf. Can anything be more divine than such a sacrifice, in which God is both priest and victim!

2. Consider the noble ends and intentions for which this sacrifice is daily offered by the Son of God in person upon our altars, where He presents Himself, attended by His heavenly host, as High-Priest of heaven and earth, and solemnly offers His body as delivered up broken and slain, and His blood as poured out. First, as a sacrifice of sovereign adoration, homage, praise, and glory to God on high, infinitely more honoured by this worship, which He here receives from His own Son mystically dying on our altars, than by all the holocausts and burnt-offerings of the patriarchs and prophets, and all the homage which all the saints put together either have or ever could offer to Him, although their whole being were to evaporate to His glory. Secondly, He offers up His body and blood as a sacrifice of thanksgiving, of most sweet odour in the sight of God, for all His graces, blessings, and communications of His goodness to any of His creatures; for our creation, preservation, redemption, for His own great glory; for the whole Church in heaven and on earth, and for all that He has done in favour of Christ (the great Head of the Church) according to His human nature. Thirdly, He offers His body and blood, together with His whole passion and death, as a sacrifice of propitiation, for the sins of the living and the dead, in

favour of whom He represents to His Eternal Father the blood of the everlasting covenant. And, fourthly, He offers the same body and blood, as a sacrifice of supplication for His whole family, that is, for His whole Church and for all its pastors and people, that all graces and blessings may flow to their souls from the fountains of their Saviour. O infinite goodness, what treasures hast thou not opened for us in these divine mysteries!

3. Consider that, as often as we celebrate or assist at these sacred mysteries, it may be proper to represent to ourselves that we are called upon, as by a royal proclamation from heaven, to be sanctified, and to come with our great High-Priest, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His whole Church, to join in a most solemn sacrifice, that is going to be offered to God, for the great ends above mentioned. Yes, Christians; for it is a most certain truth that, in this divine sacrifice, we present ourselves at the altar of God, before the throne of His mercy, with Jesus Christ His Son at our head, and in the society of His whole family, the people of God, wherever they are (for the sacrifice is offered by Jesus Christ in the name of them all) and that by the hands of this our High-Priest, and with the concurrence of His whole Church, we offer to God the most acceptable victim that can be presented to His Divine Majesty, the most agreeable adoration and thanksgiving that can be offered, the most powerful atonement for sin, and the most effectual means for obtaining all graces and blessings, by offering up the passion and death of the Son of God.

Conclusion. Approach always to these most sacred and sublime mysteries with profound veneration, lively faith, and ardent devotion; and join your intention according to these four ends, with the principal offerer, Jesus Christ, and with His whole Church.

JUNE 16.

On the Blessed Eucharist, as a Sacrifice of Adoration and Praise.

1. Consider the indispensable obligation incumbent upon man, as a rational creature made by and for God, to present his homage of adoration, praise, and glory to his Maker. For this reason the children of God from the beginning offered sacrifice to the Deity; for this reason they instituted holocausts or whole burnt-offerings, in which the victim was consumed by fire on God's altar, in testimony of His being the sovereign Lord of all; for this reason the Psalms were composed by divine inspiration, and appointed to be sung to the praise and glory of God, and to accompany the sacrifices offered in the temple of God. Such was the zeal of those ancient servants of God, in paying Him the best homage they were able of adoration and praise; and such ought to be at

all times the sincere disposition of all who believe in God, as to be willing to adore, praise, and serve their first beginning and last end with all their powers, and to consecrate their whole being to His glory. See, my soul, if this be thy disposition.

2. Consider how little is all that man can offer of his own, even though his whole being were to evaporate to the glory of God, when compared with the infinite Majesty of God and the homage and adoration He deserves. If the whole creation could be made one holocaust or burnt-offering for the glory of God, alas! it would be no more in the eyes of so great a King, than if a grain of chaff were to be burnt in honour of some earthly monarch; because there is no proportion between that which is finite and that which is infinite, and therefore the whole creation, compared to God, is less than one grain of chaff compared with an earthly monarch, or even with the whole creation. How mean, then, is all that man can offer of his own or of any other creature, and how unworthy and insufficient to be made a sacrifice of adoration and praise to the Divine Majesty! See then, my soul, how greatly we are obliged to the Son of God, who by the institution of the blessed Eucharist has furnished us with a sacrifice of adoration, homage, praise, and glory worthy of God, as being of infinite value, by reason of the infinite dignity, both of the priest and victim.

3. Consider how our Lord, dying upon the cross in obedience to His Father's will, offered Himself in sacrifice in such a manner that His death was not only in the nature of a sin-offering, or sacrifice of propitiation for the sins of the world, but also in the nature of a burnt-offering (in which the whole victim is given to God without reserve), or sacrifice of adoration, homage, praise, and glory. As then, in the blessed Eucharist, Christ Himself in person celebrates His own death, and offers the same sacrifice in substance with that which He offered upon the cross, so we have here the same adoration, homage, praise, and glory offered by Christ, as High-Priest, to His Eternal Father; and this sacrifice of adoration, homage, praise, and glory He has made over to us, so that we are enabled, by joining with Him in these sacred mysteries, to offer up daily to God a homage and adoration of infinite value.

Conclude with admiration of the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God, manifested to us in the institution of this divine sacrifice, by means of which a victim of infinite value is, and will be, daily offered till the end of the world upon a million of altars, by a priest of infinite dignity, to give infinite honour and glory to His Divine Majesty, and to be at the same time an inexhaustible source of all good to us. Let us daily and hourly join our adoration and praise, with that which is in every place offered by our High-Priest in these divine mysteries, and it will not fail of being acceptable through Him.

JUNE 17.

On the Blessed Eucharist, as a Sacrifice of Thanksgiving.

1. Consider that we are also indispensably obliged to return due thanks to God for all His bounties, favours, and mercies to us; and that, as these are infinite, He has a right to call for a return of all the gratitude and love we are capable of, and that nothing less than an infinite thanksgiving can be equivalent to the debt we owe Him. But how little is all that our store can afford towards discharging so immense a debt! If we should offer Him even our whole being, and this could be a return for the benefit of creation by which He has given it to us, what should we have left to give Him, or what return should we be able to make Him, for our redemption, preservation, vocation, and for so many other benefits, and, above all, for that eternal love of His for us which is the source of all these benefits? See, then, how good our God has been in furnishing us, by means of the Eucharistic sacrifice, with a fund to enable us to discharge this infinite debt, and to render Him a thanksgiving worthy of Him.

2. Consider that, as the thank-offerings of the law of nature and of the law of Moses fell infinitely short of answering, in a proper and sufficient manner, the obligation incumbent on mankind of returning due thanks to God, the Son of God Himself became man to make Himself our Priest and Victim, and in that quality to offer in our behalf a worthy sacrifice of thanksgiving, no less infinite, by reason of the dignity of His person, than those favours and mercies were for which He makes this return of thanks. This sacrifice of thanksgiving He offered once upon the cross, and offers daily in the Eucharist upon a million of altars throughout the world; and in this offering He expects that His whole family in heaven and on earth should join with Him, that with Him and through Him they may make a daily return of worthy thanks for all God's blessings bestowed upon both Him and them. See, my soul, thou be never wanting in this duty.

3. Consider what this thanksgiving is, that we are to offer daily to God in the sacrifice of the blessed Eucharist, a sacrifice which takes its very name from thanksgiving. 1. We are to return thanks to God for His own great glory, manifested in all His works. 2. We are to thank Him in particular for the great work of our redemption. 3. We are to offer this sacrifice, in thanksgiving for the incarnation and birth of His Son, and for all the blessings bestowed upon Him, according to His human nature, for His doctrine and miracles, for His passion and death, for His resurrection and ascension and for all that power which is

given Him in heaven and on earth. 4. We are likewise to offer sacrifice in thanksgiving for ourselves, and for the whole Church, triumphant, militant, and suffering, and for all that mercy, grace, and salvation which has at any time been derived by man from the sovereign Source of all Good, through Jesus Christ. See, Christians, how much we all, in general, have to thank God for, besides the special favours for which each one in particular stands indebted to the divine bounty. But infinite thanks be to His goodness, who has provided for us this sacrifice of infinite value, in which we may daily present ourselves before Him, in the company of Jesus Christ His Son, and make a suitable and acceptable offering, through Him, for all His favours!

Conclusion. Unite daily thy intentions with those with which Jesus Christ daily offers this sacrifice upon all the altars throughout His Church; the thanksgiving offered by Him, and nothing less, will be equal to thy debt.

JUNE 18.

On the Blessed Eucharist, as a Sacrifice of Propitiation.

1. Consider that the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ is also a sin-offering, or a sacrifice of propitiation, to obtain mercy and pardon for our sins. The debt man contracted to divine justice by sin was infinite, and nothing that any one pure man, or even all mankind together, could do or suffer, for the expiation of sin, could bear any proportion with that debt, or go any part of the way towards cancelling it, much less could the blood of oxen or goats, used in the ancient sin-offerings of the law, have any virtue in them to wash away sin. Therefore did the Son of God take a body and blood for us, to substitute this new Victim in the place of those old ones (Ps. xxxix.). This body and blood He offered in sacrifice upon the cross for the sins of all mankind; with this He paid our ransom and completely redeemed us; this same He has bequeathed to us in the sacrament, and in the sacrifice of the blessed Eucharist, in which, as our Priest and Victim, He daily appears before His Father in our behalf, and presents His passion and death to Him, to obtain the forgiveness of our sins. Thus the sacrifice of the Eucharist is truly propitiatory, in virtue of that blood of the New Testament, the fruit of which it applies to our souls.

2. Consider what an advantage it is to our souls to have daily celebrated amongst us this propitiatory sacrifice, in which the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world presents to His Eternal Father, upon our altars, under mystical veils, His body

as broken and slain for us, and His blood as shed for our sins, and with this body and blood intercedes to obtain mercy and pardon for us. What sinner can despair of the forgiveness of his sins (if, like the prodigal child, he desires to return home to his true Father), when he sees before him, bleeding as it were upon the altar, the Victim by whose blood all our sins are cancelled, when he sees the great High-Priest of God and man offering sacrifice for the remission of his sins? "Oh let us go, therefore, with confidence to this throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid" (Heb. iv. 16).

3. Consider, my soul, how much occasion thou hast for this sacrifice of propitiation. Alas! how great is the debt thou owest to divine justice for thy numberless sins! Recount to thyself, O sinner, in presence of thy God, "all thy years in the bitterness of thy soul" (Isa. xxxviii. 15). See how very early thou didst incur the dreadful guilt of mortal sin, by turning away from God to follow vanity, and thereby breaking thy baptismal engagements, profaning God's temple within thee, affronting the Spirit of God, and treading under foot the blood of the Son of God! Reflect how thy sins have been multiplied after so bad a beginning, every day from that time to this very hour. "What shalt thou offer to the Lord, that is worthy? Wherewith shalt thou kneel before the most high God?" (Mich. vi. 6.) Neither holocausts, nor thousands of rams, nor yet thy own blood, can expiate thy guilt. The blood of Christ alone can do it, and with this thou kneelest before the Most High when thou assistest at the sacrifice of the altar, where this blood is applied to thy soul. Neither is it applicable to thy soul alone, but the inexhaustible treasures of mercy, which are laid open in these sacred mysteries, give us confidence to join in a body, with our great Advocate and High-Priest at our head, and to plead for mercy, through this same blood, for our brethren both living and dead, that we may obtain for them all remission of their sins, and discharge of all the debt of punishment due to their sins.

Conclusion. Embrace this means of obtaining mercy and grace, by assisting daily, if it lie in thy power, at this propitiatory sacrifice, with a contrite and humble heart, making confession of thy sins at the feet of Jesus Christ, who is here both Priest and Victim. If thou art diligent in this practice, the blood of Christ will infallibly obtain the remission of thy sins.

JUNE 19.

On the Blessed Eucharist, as a Sacrifice of Prayer and Supplication.

1. Consider that the blessed Eucharist, inasmuch as it is a sacrifice, does not only, in a most perfect manner, answer the design

and intention of the burnt-offerings, thank-offerings, and sin-offerings of the law, by being offered in adoration and praise of the Deity, in thanksgiving for all His benefits, and for the remission of our sins, but also, with infinite advantage, answers the ends of the peace-offerings of the ancients, by being offered up for obtaining all graces and blessings from God through the blood of Jesus Christ. "No one can come to the Father but by Him" (John xiv. 6). Here we approach to God both by Him and with Him, as our Priest and Victim. "If you ask the Father anything in My name," saith He (John xvi. 23), "He will give it you." How wholesome, then, must this sacrifice of supplication be to all Christian people, in which we not only ask in the name of Jesus Christ, but come with His sacred blood before the throne of grace, and in which He Himself in person pleads for us!

2. Consider how many and great our necessities are, both in general and in particular, and how great the miseries we are liable to; that you may set a greater value upon this never-failing source of all blessings which the divine bounty has opened to us in the sacrifice of the Eucharist. Alas! of ourselves we can do nothing; we can neither believe, hope, love, nor repent, nor make so much as one step towards our justification or salvation without the help of Heaven; we are encompassed on all sides with dreadful dangers, that threaten us with the worst of evils both for time and eternity. How true it is that we are, indeed, "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked!" (Apoc. iii. 17.) But in this sacrifice our Lord has provided us with an inexhaustible fund of grace, supplied without ever failing "out of the fountains of our Saviour" (Isa. xii. 3), in order to answer all our necessities, to heal all our infirmities, to guard us against all dangers, and to redress all our miseries. Blessed be His infinite goodness! My soul, whatsoever thy wants are, here they are to be supplied; hasten to Jesus Christ, thy Priest and Sacrifice, and with Him and through Him to His Father, and He will give thee all good, with Himself, the supreme good.

3. Consider that, in this sacrifice of supplication and prayer, we are not limited in our addresses, as if we were to ask and to receive for ourselves alone; but as we have here upon the altar the Victim slain for the redemption of the whole world, and as the High-Priest of God and man appears before His Heavenly Father in behalf of all mankind, we are authorised to put up our petitions with Him and through Him for the general necessities of the whole Church of God and of all mankind, that the holy name of God may be sanctified by all, that His kingdom of grace may be propagated through all nations and through all hearts, that His will may be done by all and in all things, that His Church may be exalted by the sanctity of her prelates and pastors and propagated throughout the world, that all infidels, heretics, and sinners may be converted, that all errors and abuses may be corrected,

that we may be preserved from war, famine, plague, earthquake, and all other evils, and that, "being delivered from the hands of our enemies, we may serve God without fear, in holiness and justice, before Him all our days" (Luke i. 74, 75). All this, with other graces and blessings, we are encouraged to ask with confidence for the whole world in this sacrifice, where Christ is both priest and victim.

Conclusion. Employ always to the best advantage that favourable time when thou art assisting at the sacrifice of the altar, for it is then thou art near the fountain-head, whence all our good must flow.

JUNE 20.

On the Devotion with which we are to assist at the Sacrifice of the Altar.[1]

1. Consider that those heavenly mysteries which we celebrate in the sacrifice of the altar, and the real presence of Jesus Christ the Son of God, whom we believe to be truly there both as priest and victim, require that we should assist thereat, with all possible devotion, but especially with a lively faith, a most profound reverence, and a heart inflamed with love for that Lamb of God who there offers Himself in sacrifice for us. The servants of God have sometimes seen angels assisting around the altar and adoring their Lord; open thou thine eyes, my soul, as often as thou art present at the sacred mysteries, to contemplate, with a lively faith, this Lord of angels upon our altars, accompanied with these heavenly spirits, and see thou worship Him there with that awful reverence and tender affection which His infinite Majesty, and His boundless love for thee, require at thy hands. Reflect on that profound respect with which the people of God in ancient times reverenced the sanctuary, in which the ark of the covenant was deposited so that no one but the high-priest, and he but once a year, was allowed to enter within the veil. How much more profoundly oughtest thou to reverence this true sanctuary of God, and the Lord Himself of the covenant, present in our tremendous mysteries!

2. Consider, that as this sacrifice has especial relation to the passion and death of the Son of God, in such manner as to be, in effect, the same sacrifice, the same victim and the same priest, so the devotion with which we are to assist at the altar should have particular relation to the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Our Saviour Himself officiates in person, and acts, as in a sacred tragedy, His passion and death; we ought, then, to accompany Him in this action with suitable affection and devotion. Had we been present, with true belief in Him, when He was offering upon the cross the sacrifice of our redemption, with what senti

ments of love and gratitude, with what deep sense of sorrow and repentance for our sins, with what fervent devotion, should we have waited upon Him there, meditating upon His infinite goodness and love for us, manifested in His passion, and on the heinous enormity of our sins, which could not be expiated but with His sacred blood? With like sentiments of devotion ought we to assist at this solemn memorial and representation of His passion, in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

3. Consider that as often as we assist at this sacrifice, we are not only to commemorate, by meditation, the passion and death of the Son of God, but also to take with us, as it were, to God the Father, His Son slain for us, and His precious blood shed for us; and this in such a manner as to offer ourselves also to Him, with the whole Church, which is the mystical body of His Son, by His hands, and in union with the offering which He, who is our Head, there makes of Himself. We are, at the same time, to join our intentions with His, as He is our chief priest and principal offerer, and with those of the whole people of God, according to the four great ends of the sacrifice, going as it were in a body, with Christ Jesus at our head, and with Him we are to offer adoration, praise, and thanksgiving to God, and to beg mercy through Him, both for ourselves and for all the world. Thus the whole Church of God daily joins herself with Christ Jesus her Head, both as the offerer and the offering, in these divine mysteries.

Conclude with a resolution of doing thy best to assist daily at this great sacrifice with suitable devotion. Go thither in the same spirit, as if thou wert going to Mount Calvary to contemplate there thy Divine Redeemer, offering Himself a bleeding sacrifice for the sins of the world. And see thou remember to join thy offering of thyself with the offering He there makes of Himself, and thy intentions with His intentions.

JUNE 21.

On Spiritual Communion.

1. Consider that next to the consecration, in which consists the very essence of the sacrifice of the altar, inasmuch as the body and blood of Christ are thereby exhibited and presented to God for the ends of the sacrifice, the principal part is the communion. Now, all the assistants ought to join with the priest, in offering by his hands, and by the hands of the Invisible High-Priest, Christ Jesus, this most holy sacrifice, for those great ends; so it were to be wished, that all would join with him in the communion also, at least by making a spiritual communion as often as they hear Mass. This spiritual communion, when made with proper devotion, brings Jesus Christ to our souls in

spirit so that, though we do not receive verily and indeed His body and blood, we partake plentifully of His heavenly grace, and unite ourselves in spirit to Him who is the foundation of all grace. Let us continually aspire after this union of grace and love.

2. Consider that, in order to make this spiritual communion with fruit, we must be in the state of grace; Jesus Christ will not unite Himself to a soul in which Satan dwells. Then we must invite our Lord into our inward house. 1. By a lively faith in His real presence on our altars, of what He is, of what He has done and suffered for the love of us, and what those treasures are which He carries with Him in this sacrament, and which He desires to impart to us. 2. By an ardent desire, in the way of hunger and thirst after this life-giving food. 3. By profound humility, in the acknowledgment of our great unworthiness to receive Him sacramentally, and bewailing our manifold sins in His presence. And lastly, by inflamed affections of love, offering our whole selves to Him, and pressing Him to come and take full possession of our souls for time and eternity. Such devotion as this will not fail to bring Him to us, and engage Him to open His heavenly treasures in our favour.

3. Consider that a spiritual communion may be made with fruit to the soul, not only as often as we assist at the sacrifice of the Altar, but also at any time we please of the day or night, and this by sighing after Jesus Christ, by inviting Him into our souls, by offering our whole souls to Him, by embracing Him and loving Him with all our power; for He loves all who love Him. He is quickly found by all who seek Him, and gives Himself to all who give themselves to Him. Oh happy exchange! Give then thyself, my soul, at all times, to this thy sovereign and infinite Good, and He will communicate Himself to thee. This kind of communion is not tied to time or place, but will bring thy God to thee whenever thou pleasest; and what canst thou receive or desire, either greater or better?

Conclusion. Make a spiritual communion every day of thy life, and even repeat it often in the day, the oftener the better. This frequent repetition of acts of faith, love, and desire will unite thee to thy sovereign Good, so that He will live in thee, and thou in Him.

JUNE 22.

On the Sacrament of Penance.

1. Consider the infinite goodness of God who, not content with instituting in our favour the Sacrament of Baptism, for the forgiveness of all foregoing sins, and to give a new birth to our souls,

to make us His children; the Sacrament of Confirmation, to give us the Holy Ghost to make us strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Christ, and the Sacrament of the blessed Eucharist, to feed and nourish our souls to everlasting life; has also considered our frailty and misery in the institution of the Sacrament of Penance, for the forgiveness of the sins we fall into after baptism, as a plank by which we may still escape to the happy shore of eternal life, after having by mortal sin suffered shipwreck, and lost the treasures of baptismal grace and innocence. Embrace, O my soul, this infinite goodness of thy God, adore, praise, and give thanks to thy Saviour for this His merciful institution. Alas! what must have become of thee, after so many sins, if He had not ordained for thee this wholesome bath, of easy access, to wash away with His own most precious blood those stains of thine, which otherwise must have been the eternal fuel of hell's merciless flames.

2. Consider what this Sacrament of Penance is, and of what virtue and efficacy. We have the account of the institution of it (John xx. 21–23), where He, to whom "all power is given, in heaven and earth," was pleased to impart one branch of this power to His Apostles and their lawful successors in the ministry, in these words: "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you: Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." This absolution of penitent sinners we call the Sacrament of Penance. And a sacrament it is, because it is an outward sign of inward grace, even of the grace of remission of our sins, by virtue of the institution of Jesus Christ, ascertained in the ample commission above rehearsed. A commission that comes to the Church, stamped with the broad seal of heaven, from Him who has in His hands the whole power of heaven; a commission that is not restrained as to time or place, nor makes exception of any sin whatsoever, provided the sinner applies with proper dispositions to the power of the keys granted by Christ to His Church (Matt. xvi.). How rich art Thou, O Lord, in mercy! How true it is that Thy tender mercies to us are above all Thy works! The angels committed but one sin, and that in thought only, and they were cast off and condemned for ever, without being allowed either time or grace to repent, or any means of forgiveness or reconciliation; we sin again and again, and Thou hast still mercy in store for us in this sacrament of reconciliation. May all heaven and earth give glory to Thee for ever, for the wonders of Thy goodness and Thy love for us.

3. Consider that the Sacrament of Penance, besides the absolution given by the minister of Christ in His name, and by His authority, requires also, on the part of the sinner, contrition, confession, and satisfaction, at least in desire; the absolution pronounced by the priest will have no effect, it will serve only to the

sinner's greater condemnation without those three necessary ingredients of this sacrament. Contrition is a hearty sorrow for having offended so good a God, with a full determination, by the help of His grace, not to be guilty of the like for the future. Confession is a full and sincere accusation of ourselves, as to the kind and number of our sins, to the pastors of the Church, who have received from Christ the charge of our souls. Satisfaction is a faithful performance of the penance enjoined by them for our sins. Christians, see upon what conditions you are to be admitted to a reconciliation with your Father, after you have gone astray from Him by sin. You must renounce, by sincere contrition, the husks of swine, which you have unhappily preferred before Him; you must humble yourselves, by a sincere and sorrowful confession to His vicegerents of your past errors and disloyalties; and you must offer yourselves to make all the satisfaction that lies in your power, and then He will receive you with open arms, as He did the prodigal son (Luke xv.).

Conclusion. Set a great value upon this sacred institution, and have speedy recourse to it whenever you have fallen into sin. But see it be with due dispositions.

JUNE 23.

On the Confession of our Sins.

1. Consider that God always expected from sinners a humble confession of their sins. This He prescribed in the old law (Num. v. 6, 7). "When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the Lord, and that person be guilty, then they shall confess their sin which they have done," &c. This He ordained in the new law by the very institution of the Sacrament of Penance, which necessarily includes or presupposes confession. This was signified by the ordinance of the law (Lev. xiii., xiv.) prescribing, that such as were infected with leprosy, which was a figure of sin, should show themselves to the priests, and be under their inspection and direction. This was practised by the people that came to St. John the Baptist (Matt. iii. 6), and by the primitive Christians and disciples of the Apostles (Acts xix. 18; James v. 16). This was always insisted upon in the Church of God. And surely nothing could be more just than that the sinner should submit to this humiliation, as some small atonement for the pride and presumption by which he had rebelled against his God.

2. Consider the many advantages the soul receives from the Catholic practice of humbly confessing our sins to the minister of Christ, whom He has tied up by all laws to perpetual and indispensable secrecy. It procures us proper medicines and prescrip-

tions for our spiritual maladies, which we here lay open to the physician of the soul; it furnishes us with counsel in our doubts, comfort in our sorrows, and remedies against temptations; it gives present ease to the wounded conscience; it rectifies our errors, enlightens our ignorance, restrains our passions; it gives new strength of resolution and courage to do better for the time to come; and, what is one of its greatest advantages, it humbles the soul, and teaches us to know and to despise ourselves. What blessings are entailed upon this sacred institution of confession! How much do these outbalance the momentary confusion that may accompany the declaration of our sins!

3. Consider that the principal advantage of a humble and sorrowful confession of our sins is, that it is the means by divine appointment for obtaining absolution and remission of our transgressions, and reinstating us in God's favour and grace; and this by virtue of the commission given by Jesus Christ to His ministers, with the solemn asseveration, that "whatsoever they should bind upon earth, should be bound also in heaven; and that whatsoever they should loose upon earth, should be loosed also in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 18). How happy would that criminal account himself who should be allowed to escape the hand of human justice, by a sorrowful acknowledgment of his crimes, in secret to his judge, or to one appointed by him! But how much more happy is the penitent Christian when, by a humble confession of his sins, with sincere repentance, to the minister of Jesus Christ, he is assured of being delivered, not out of the hands of men, who can kill the body and then can do no more, but out of the hands of the living God, who otherwise will cast both body and soul into hell; and not only of being delivered out of the hands of divine justice, but of being received into the arms of His loving-kindness, and made once more a friend and child of God, and an heir of His eternal kingdom!

Conclusion. Give thanks to the divine bounty for having ordained for us this easy means of reconciliation after sin, and annexed so many graces and blessings to it. But beware of abusing this most wholesome and sacred institution, by making it an occasion of sinning more freely, or by using it only as a thing of course, or as an empty ceremony, without any true change of heart.

JUNE 24.

On the Nativity of St. John the Baptist.

1. Consider how just it is that we should show particular honour and veneration to this saint, of whom our Saviour tells us (Matt. xi. 18), "that there hath not risen among them that are born

of women a greater than John the Baptist." "He was a burning and a shining light" (John v. 35); "the special friend of the Bridegroom" (iii. 29); "the angel sent before His face to prepare His way" (Matt. xi. 10); "a prophet, and more than a prophet" (v. 9); an apostle "sent from God for a witness to give testimony of the light, that all men might believe through Him" (John i. 6, 7). A martyr, in laying down his life for justice and truth; a hermit, in retiring from his childhood into the desert, and there consecrating his days and nights to the exercise of devotion and self-denial; a zealous preacher of penance, to reclaim sinners from their evil ways, and to prepare them for Christ; a virgin, by the perpetual purity of his life. See, Christians, what we have to honour in this great saint, what we have to embrace and love in him, and what lessons we are to learn from him.

2. Consider that, in other saints, the Church honours the day of their departure out of this transitory life, which she celebrates as their birthday; because on that day they pass from their dying here below to their true life with God above, and are happily born there, where they shall never die. But in St. John Baptist we honour also the day of his birth into this mortal life, by reason of his being sanctified in his mother's womb, and of the wonders which accompanied his birth, which was to the world, sitting till then in darkness and in the shadow of death, like the first dawning of the new daylight, which the Son of God, whose forerunner he was, was coming to bring amongst us. Therefore we rejoice in his nativity, as the Angel foretold (Luke i. 14), and glorify the Author of all these wonders, by celebrating, with love and gratitude, this birth of St. John, as a prelude of our redemption. See, my soul, if these be thy dispositions on this day.

3. Consider that St. John was a saint from his birth; he always preserved his innocence, and wholly dedicated himself, from his very childhood, to the love and service of his Maker. To this end he retired, when very young, to the wilderness, to fly the corruptions and distractions of the world: "The child grew," says Luke (i. 80), "and was strengthened in spirit, and was in the desert until the day of his manifestation to Israel." Happy they who wholly consecrate themselves from their tender years to divine love! How good it is for a man, when he hath borne the sweet yoke of the Lord from his youth!" (Lam. iii. 27). O my soul, that we had been so happy! Let us begin now at least, and from this moment let us dedicate ourselves to be servants of divine love, henceforth and for ever.

Conclude, if thou desire to imitate the early piety and innocence of John, to follow him, as much as possible, into the wilderness, by retiring at least from the wicked ways and infected air of the world, from the company and conversation of the slaves of the world; from the dangerous pastimes of worldlings, and from

the occasions of sin, so common in the world ; and especially take care to make a private cell for thyself in thy own interior, and to keep thyself there, by inward recollection, in a holy solitude with thy God.

JUNE 25

On the Lessons we are to learn from St. John Baptist.

1. Consider that the design in keeping the festivals of the saints is, not only to honour God in His saints, and to give Him thanks for the grace and glory bestowed upon them through Jesus Christ, but also to encourage the faithful to an imitation of their virtues, in hope of arriving one day at their blessed company by walking in their footsteps. If, then, we desire to keep the festival of St. John in a suitable manner, we must endeavour to learn the lessons he teaches by his great example. His whole life in the desert was one continued exercise of prayer and mortification ; these are the lessons that all Christians must, in some measure, learn who desire to come to the eternal society of the saints. If our daily occupations, if human frailty, will not allow us to have that continual attention to God which St. John had, at least we must frequently and fervently aspire after Him in the midst of our employments, and give every day a regular and competent time to the holy exercise of prayer. If we cannot bring ourselves to such hard diet, clothing, and lodging as his was, at least we must daily retrench superfluities in eating, drinking, clothing, sleep, and unnecessary diversions ; we must mortify our vanity, curiosity, and sensuality, and learn on many occasions to renounce our own will, to give up our own humours, and to contradict our darling inclinations.

2. Consider the humility of St. John, how mean an opinion he had of himself, how little regard he had to the esteem and applause of the world ; how he freely and openly professed to the people, who had the highest opinion of him, that he was neither Christ, nor Elias, nor a prophet, but only a voice of one crying in the wilderness, and unworthy of doing the meanest office to Him who was to follow him ; how glad he was, when he saw himself decrease in the opinion of the world, and his glory eclipsed by the preaching and miracles of Jesus Christ ! O blessed humility, which alone art capable of making any one great before the Lord ! All other virtues are grounded on thee ; without thee they degenerate into vices. Christians, let us study well this most necessary lesson.

3. Consider the zeal of St. John for the glory of God, and his constancy in maintaining justice and truth without respect of persons, even to the laying down his life in the cause. He was not "a reed shaken with the wind ;" he knew not what it was to flatter worldlings in their evil ways, or to comply through

human respect with anything contrary to conscience; he would not call evil good, nor good evil. He zealously preached to sinners of all degrees and conditions the necessity of effectually renouncing their evil ways, and bringing forth worthy fruits of penance; he denounced the heavy judgments of God to the impenitent, and encouraged the penitent with the prospect of mercy. Christians, let us attend to these lessons, which the Baptist so strongly inculcated both by word and work. The God whom we worship is the sovereign Justice and the sovereign Truth. If, then, we would be Christians indeed, we must, like St. John, be willing to lay down our very lives rather than offend against Justice and Truth.

Conclusion. Walk in the footsteps of St. John, and they will bring thee to Christ. He was sent to prepare the people for Him and to direct them to Him; attend to his preaching and example, and he will do this good office also for thee.

JUNE 26.

On the Preparation we ought to make for Confession.

1. Consider that confession, without due dispositions, will serve only for our greater condemnation; so that the great business of a sinner, who desires to receive such absolution from his sins as may be ratified in heaven, must be to procure the necessary dispositions, by making due preparation for confession. And as these dispositions must come from the Giver of all good gifts, and as the sinner has removed himself to a great distance from Him, the first part of his preparation must be to turn to God, with a great sense of the misery of his present condition, by fervent prayer and desire. The raising a soul to life, which is dead to God by mortal sin, is, in effect, no less a miracle of the divine power than the calling of Lazarus out of his grave, after he had been four days dead and buried; there can be, then, no expectation of succeeding in so arduous an undertaking, without taking Him along with us, by earnest prayer, who alone can raise the dead. No, my soul, the most essential conditions of a good confession are a change of heart, and a perfect sincerity in the accusation of ourselves, even of those sins we are most ashamed of, and who but God can change the heart of man, or bring him to overcome his pride, by a full confession of his shameful sins? or how can so great a grace as this be procured without ardent prayer?

2. Consider that another necessary part of the preparation for confession is to find out, by a serious examination, the true state of our interior. Alas! it is one of our greatest misfortunes not

to know ourselves, and it is much to be feared that many pass their whole lives under the guilt of mortal sin, pride, envy, hatred, detraction, omission of essential duties, which for want of a serious and impartial examination of the true state of their consciences, they neither confess, nor repent of, nor amend. Hence their confessions are null, their communions sacrilegious; they go on all their lifetime in their sins, and they die in their sins. My soul, see this be not thy case; see thou labour in earnest to know thyself; see thou examine seriously thy interior, that thou mayest be able to discover, by the light of God which thou must implore, those lurking evils which thy busy self-love, or the maxims and practices of deluded worldlings, may otherwise disguise under false pretences, and hide from thine eyes.

3. Consider that the principal and most necessary preparation for a good confession is true contrition; that is, a hearty sorrow and detestation of our sins, by which we have offended so good a God, with a firm resolution of thorough amendment for the time to come, and of making the best satisfaction we can for our past offences. This is the most essential part, both of the virtue and of the Sacrament of Penance. This we must take the most pains about, when we are to go to confession. This we must labour to procure by serious and deep consideration of the most moving truths, and by repeated and fervent prayer; and never leave off knocking at the door of divine mercy till He is pleased to open to us and to touch our hearts. Alas! none but He can bring forth the waters of true compunction out of these hard rocks.

Conclusion. Be diligent in every branch of this necessary preparation, as often as thou desirest to make thy peace with God, by confession; lest otherwise, instead of obtaining a discharge, thou increase thy debt.

JUNE 27.

On the Motives of Repentance.

1. Consider the motives we have to repent of our sins, from the consideration of the filthiness of that ugly monster sin, and of its heinous enormity in the sight of God. Mortal sin is infinitely odious to Him, because infinitely opposed to His sovereign goodness and to His divine attributes. It is infinitely pernicious to our souls, it makes them like very devils in the eyes of God. It robs us of divine grace, which is the true life of the soul, and of all our good; it is a poison, which in a moment brings present death, and condemns us to a second and eternal death. It is an evil so black, so odious, so hideous, that hell itself has nothing worse. It leaves behind it a cursed stain, the perpetual fuel of the merciless flames of hell, which endless ages will never be able

to efface. Alas! my poor soul, how wretched has thy case been all the while thou hast been in sin! How ugly and abominable hast thou been in the sight of God and His angels! for the foulest creature upon earth is beautiful in comparison with a soul in sin. Couldst thou but see thyself as thou art in this wretched state, the very sight would strike thee dead! Detest, then, this abominable monster, and spare no pains to get rid of it.

2. Consider the woes that are pronounced in Scripture against unrepenting sinners, and the judgments of God that are perpetually hanging over their heads, and threatening them on all sides, with both temporal and eternal evils. What good can they expect, who have made God their enemy, and are fighting against Him! He holds the thread of their life in His hands, which they are provoking Him to break; and if He breaks it, that moment they drop into hell. They have made themselves slaves of the devil, they are possessed by him, and are at his mercy, who knows not what mercy is. Death is always following at their heels, and a sudden, or at least an unprovided, death is commonly the reward of their presumption. Hell below opens wide her jaws and is gaping to swallow them, and thousands are daily going down into that bottomless pit, "where the worm never dies, and the fire is never extinguished" (Mark ix. 43). Who can bear everlasting fire! Who can endure to burn for ever! Fly then, my soul, from sin. Detest that evil, which can, and will, without repentance, condemn thee to hell.

3. Consider that sin makes a dreadful separation between the soul and God, which is begun here, and extends to all eternity hereafter. "You are not My people," says He (Osee i. 9), "and I will not be yours." Alas! the loss of God, which begins from mortal sin, is the very worst of all the ingredients of hell. Sin is a rebellion against this sovereign Good, a blasphemous preference of Satan before Him, a sacrilegious attempt to rob Him of His glory and to divest Him of His kingdom. It is murdering both the Son of God and our own souls. The folly and madness of it, as well as the monstrous presumption and treason, are infinite. How much, then, does that evil deserve to be detested which robs us of an infinite good, which otherwise should have been ours for all eternity, and brings nothing in exchange but endless and infinite evils!

Conclusion. Labour with all thy power to drive away sin from thy soul by penance, and God will return to thee and be thine for ever.

JUNE 28.

Other Motives of Contrition.

1. Consider the monstrous ingratitude in sin. God is our first beginning and our last end; He has given us our whole being,

out of pure love; having no need of us, He has made us, and made us for Himself; He has thought of us from all eternity, He has loved us from all eternity, and has prepared for us a happy eternity in the enjoyment of Himself. In the meantime, He is ever loading us with benefits; His eyes are always upon us, He preserves us from innumerable evils, all His other works are appointed to serve us, His very angels wait upon us, His own Son came down from heaven to redeem us. Reflect, my soul, on the particular obligations thou hast to His divine goodness! How He preserved thee in thy mother's womb, and brought thee safe to the water of baptism, where He washed thee from sin, made thee His child and heir to His kingdom, how He gave thee an early knowledge of Himself and of His heavenly truths, how He favoured thee with many graces and opportunities of good, beyond thousands, how often He has admitted thee to His sacraments, how He has borne with thy repeated provocations and treasons for so many years, and, notwithstanding all thy unworthiness and ingratitude, has been still thy constant benefactor. Alas! how many are now burning in hell for sins like to those thou hast so often committed, and how mercifully has He all this while dealt with thee! Detest, then, this sinful life thou hast hitherto led, and all thy past ingratitude, and now at least, with thy whole heart, return to thy God.

2. Consider, my soul, what thy sins have cost thy dear Redeemer, the innocent Lamb of God. His whole life was a continual suffering, but what dreadful torments did He not endure for thee in His passion and death! Call over in your mind the particulars of His sufferings, from His agony and bloody sweat even to His expiring upon the cross, and learn from that multitude and variety of torments, willingly endured for thy sins, how much He abhors sin, and how much He loves thee. For He had thee in His heart all this while, and for thee He was weeping and praying, bleeding and dying, to teach thee to return love for love, and to detest thy sins, which have crucified thy God. See, then, what motives thou hast for contrition, from the remembrance of the passion of thy Saviour.

3. Consider the innumerable motives we have to love God, and consequently to detest our sins, as infinitely opposed to His divine goodness. He is infinitely good in Himself, infinitely beautiful, the overflowing ocean of all goodness and beauty, ravishing all who are so happy as to see Him, so that they can never cease to love Him. His mercy, His bounty, His wisdom, His truth, all perfections are infinite in Him. No tongue can express, no heart conceive, the incomprehensible greatness and multitude of His attractions. All created beauty and perfection disappear, and dwindle away to nothing, when compared with Him. He is infinitely good to us; the happiness of heaven consists in seeing, loving, and enjoying Him. All our good is from Him, and in

Him; He is our sovereign and universal Good; the Being of our being, the life and light of our souls. He is our Maker, our Redeemer, our Father, our Friend, our Spouse, our God, and our All. To love Him is our greatest honour, our greatest interest, our greatest pleasure, the source of all our happiness, both here and hereafter. All these reasons oblige us to love God, all these motives strongly call upon us to detest and to repent of our sins, because by them we have offended so good a God.

Conclusion. If thou wouldst secure to thy soul the remission of thy sins, seek it by repentance and contrition enlivened by love. Remember what our Lord said of that glorious penitent Magdalene (Luke vii. 47): "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much." Go thou, in like manner, to the feet of thy Saviour with penitential tears proceeding from love, and He will pronounce the like sentence in thy favour.

JUNE 29.

On St. Peter and St. Paul.

1. Consider the wonders of God in these two glorious saints; reflect what they were before they were called by Jesus Christ, how admirably they were afterwards exalted by divine grace, and how perfectly they corresponded with divine grace, by their zeal and by their labours, their lives and their deaths. The Wisdom of God came down from heaven, to build a house, to found a city, to establish a kingdom upon earth, which should be victorious over all the powers of hell, and should subsist till time itself should end. And see what choice He has made of men to be His principal instruments in this great work. See in the person of St. Peter, a poor illiterate fisherman, made the master-builder, under Christ, of this house and temple, and at the same time the strong rock and foundation of it; see him raised to be the first governor of this city, the prime minister of this kingdom of God upon earth (Matt. xvi. 18, 19; John xxi. 15, &c.) How true it is, that "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world that He may confound the wise, and the weak things of the world that He may confound the strong, and the things that are contemptible, and things that are not, that no flesh should glory in His sight" (1 Cor. i. 27, &c.) O Divine Wisdom, how incomprehensible are thy ways, and how much exalted above the ways of men! How do these thy dealings with us confound the proud and comfort the humble!

2. Consider, in the person of St. Paul, another still more admirable instance of the power of divine grace and of the incomprehensible wisdom of the ways of God. An ignorant fisherman, as St. Peter was, seems indeed nowise qualified to be a preacher

and teacher of Jews and Gentiles, a founder of churches, an apostle and prince of the Apostles, but then he was humble and simple, and such God usually chooses for the greatest things. But as for St. Paul, he was not only not qualified to be a preacher of the Gospel, but positively disqualified by dispositions directly contrary to the humility and simplicity of the Gospel. He was a blasphemous Pharisee, a fiery zealot, a bloody persecutor, a ravening wolf, scattering and destroying the sheep of Christ. And yet he is made, in a moment, by a miracle of grace, a vessel of election, to carry the name of Christ before nations and kings and the children of Israel; he is changed in an instant from a wolf into a lamb; he puts off at once the Pharisee, the blasphemer, the persecutor; he lays down his own will at the feet of Christ, and has now no other passion but that of employing his whole life in propagating the name, the will, and the kingdom of his God. Here is a change of the right hand of the Most High! Here the wonders of God's power, wisdom, and goodness shine forth much more brightly than even in raising the dead to life.

3. Consider the lives of these two great saints, after their call and election, their ardent zeal for the glory of their Lord, their unwearied labours in preaching and propagating His kingdom, their constancy in a long course of sufferings, dying, in a manner daily, for the cause of God; and, above all things, that divine love and charity which continually burned in their breasts, which animated all their words and actions, supported them in all their labours and sufferings, kept them always in their interior united to their God, and was daily growing stronger and stronger in them, till it made them victorious over death, and brought them to true life, in the eternal enjoyment of the great object of their love.

Conclusion. Give praise and glory to God, for all the graces and glory bestowed upon these two princes and pillars of His Church. Study to learn the great lessons they taught, both by word and work. But especially learn of them the practice of divine love. Nothing else can make us saints.

JUNE 30.

On Sincerity in Confession.

1. Consider the necessity of being sincere in the confession of our sins, if we hope for the forgiveness of them. Hypocrisy and double-dealing, in matters of this consequence, is abominable in the sight of God. The prophet pronounces a curse against them "that do the work of the Lord deceitfully" (Jer. xlviii. 10). And surely they must be guilty, in the highest degree, of doing the work of God deceitfully, who go to confession with fraud and

deceit, and, while they outwardly profess humility and sincerity, conceal through the pride of their heart, and disguise by lies, the guilt of their conscience. Ananias and Saphira were struck dead by a visible judgment of God, for telling "a lie to the Holy Ghost" (Acts v.). And are not such as are insincere in the confession of their sins, guilty in like manner of telling a lie to the Holy Ghost, whilst they seek to impose upon the minister of God in this most solemn and sacred function? They are guilty also of a grievous sacrilege, as often as they receive absolution in this case, by profaning the Sacrament of Penance, which sacrilege is commonly followed by another still greater, in making themselves guilty of the body and blood of Christ, by an unworthy communion, and thereby receiving damnation to themselves. Good God, preserve us from so heinous and so dreadful an evil!

2. Consider the dismal consequences of suffering one's self to be imposed upon in such a manner, by the father of lies, as to conceal any matter of moment in confession, either through shame, or fear, or pride of heart. Alas! to avoid a little present confusion, which would be immediately followed by the recovery of God's favour, with peace of conscience, comfort, and joy, what a bottomless pit of dreadful and endless evils does the soul cast herself headlong into! What inextricable difficulties, pains, and perplexities! For she has no sooner yielded herself up to the old serpent by this criminal concealment, but this dumb devil takes such possession of her, as to make her apprehend the confession of her guilt, more than either death or hell. Hence she goes on adding sin to sin, sacrilege to sacrilege, burdened all the while by her own conscience, gnawed with remorse, which she seeks in vain to stifle, and carrying about with her a painful sting in her heart, which never suffers her to be easy. She deludes herself indeed with vain purposes of confessing some time or other hereafter, but meanwhile her difficulties increase, the devil daily acquires more power over her, and the grace of God is removed still further from her, till at length mercy abused gives place to justice, and when she least expects it she is cut off in her sins, and carries down with her the guilt of them all to hell.

3. Consider how little reason there is for a penitent to be so much ashamed of the confession of his sins. Sin, indeed, is shameful, but the confession of one's sin is not so. No, the humble confession of a sinner gives glory to God, is honourable to the penitent himself, and affords joy to the whole court of heaven. And as to the confessor, besides that he is tied up by all laws to eternal secrecy, and can make no use of the knowledge he receives in confession, he is so far from despising or thinking worse of the prodigal child returning home by confession, or having less regard or affection for his penitent on this account, that, on the contrary, as he more clearly sees the hand of God in

the humility and sincerity of the confession, he rejoices in this happy change, he loves the penitent better than before, and conceives greater hopes of him for the future, and, thinking no more of the past, has a more tender regard than ever for a soul that has thus unbosomed herself to him. In the meantime, the penitent finds himself in a manner in paradise, by the comfort and joy he feels in having discharged his conscience of its load that would not suffer him to be easy.

Conclusion. Beware of the tricks of the father of lies, who hates nothing so much as a humble confession, and therefore makes use of innumerable artifices to induce Christians to pass over, or disguise at least, their sins, in the Sacrament of Penance. How many thousands of souls has he deluded by these artifices, and drawn down into the bottomless pit! Alas! how easy it is for persons to be deceived who, in effect, have a mind to be deceived, and are willing, at any rate, to form to themselves a false conscience, by some pretext or other, and spare themselves the shame of confessing their sins. See, my soul, this never be thy case, and therefore whensoever thou findest a repugnance to confess any part of thy guilt, and a willingness to find some reason to dispense thyself, be sure to confess the sooner that in which thou findest this repugnance, for fear of thy being imposed upon by pride or self-love.

JULY 1.

On Time and Eternity.

1. Consider how precious a thing time is, which we are so apt to squander away as if it were of no value. Time is the measure of our lives; therefore as much as we lose of our time, so much of our lives is absolutely lost. All our time is given us in order to employ it in the service of our Maker, and by that means secure to our souls a happy eternity; and there is no moment of it in which we may not store up for ourselves a treasure for eternity; so that, as many as we lose of these precious moments, so many are there lost eternities. Time is a talent with which God has entrusted us, and of which He will one day demand a strict account how we have spent every hour of it. Our salvation or damnation for eternity will depend upon the good or bad use of time. How little do we think of this! How little do we think of the sins we are daily guilty of, in squandering away so much of this precious time!

2. Consider how short is the time of this mortal life, a mere nothing compared with eternity, and how quickly it passes away. When past, it is no more; it leaves no footsteps behind it. The time to come is not ours; we cannot promise ourselves one moment of it. The present time is all we can call our own, and

God only knows how long it will be so. It flies away in an instant, and, when once gone, it cannot be called back. Our hours, one after another, all hasten away into the vast gulf of eternity, and are swallowed up there, to appear no more. The moment in which we are reading this line is passing, never to return. And as many of these hours, as many of these moments, as are at once lost, are lost for ever, the loss is irreparable. Learn hence, my soul, to set a just value on thy present time; learn to husband it well, and employ it to the best advantage.

3. Consider that, as all time is short and passes quickly away, so the enjoyment of the honours, riches, and pleasures of this world are of like condition; they all pass away with time; they are all transitory, uncertain, and inconstant. Only eternity, and the good or evil it comprises, are truly great, as being without end, without change, without comparison; admitting of no mixture of evil in its good, nor any alloy of comfort in its evil. How quickly does the glory of this world pass away! How very soon will all temporal grandeur, all worldly pride and state, all the riches and pleasures of worldlings, be buried in the coffin! A few short years are more than any one can promise himself. And after that, poor sinner, what will become of thee? Alas! the worms will prey upon thy body, and merciless devils on thy unrepenting soul! Thy worldly friends will all forget thee. The very stone on which thou hast got thy name engraved will not long outlast thee. How true is that sentence, "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, but to love God, and to serve Him alone!" (Kempis).

Conclusion. Make such use of this present time, and of all temporary things, as to make them serviceable to thy soul in her journey towards eternity. But take care not to let thy heart cleave to them by disorderly affection, lest thou be entangled in them and perish with them.

JULY 2.

On the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin.

1. Consider how the Blessed Virgin, having conceived in her womb the Son of God, and having learned from the angel Gabriel that her kinswoman St. Elizabeth had also, by a miracle, conceived a son in her old age, makes haste to visit her, to impart grace and sanctity both to the mother and the son. See, my soul, how the Son of God, incarnate for us, whilst yet in His Mother's womb, begins to communicate His graces, not only to His Blessed Mother, by elevating her soul daily more and more to greater fulness of grace, but also to John Baptist, His forerunner (sanctifying him before he was born), and to holy St. Elizabeth, filling

her with the Holy Ghost, and making his Blessed Mother the instrument of these wonders. Give ear to the Gospel (Luke i. 39, &c.) "Mary, rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda. And she entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost; and she cried with a loud voice, and said: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For, behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord." This visitation, so full of mysteries, and the source of so many extraordinary graces, is honoured by the Church in the festival of this day.

2. Consider, more in particular, the wonders of this day's visit. See how at the first words of the Mother of God, by the all-powerful grace of Him whom she bears in her womb, the Baptist is immediately cleansed from original sin. See how he is justified and sanctified in his mother's womb; see how the use of reason is advanced in him, and how in that darksome prison he is made sensible of the presence of the "true Light, which enlightened every man that cometh into this world;" see with what ardour of devotion and love he is carried towards his Lord and his sovereign Good, and leaps for joy at His presence, longing, as it were, to break forth from his confinement, and to go before him and publish aloud to all the world, "Behold the Lamb of God! Behold Him who taketh away the sin of the world!" (John i. 29). But see also the wonderful lights and extraordinary graces that are communicated to St. Elizabeth by this visitation; see how she is filled with the Holy Ghost; see in how clear a manner the great mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, with all its consequences and fruits, is revealed to her; what a sense she has of the high dignity of the Virgin Mother of God; and with what ardour of devotion she publishes aloud the sentiments of her soul, and glorifies both the Son and the Mother, acknowledging herself infinitely unworthy of so great a favour as that of a visit from them. Bless the Lord, my soul, for all these wonders of His grace, and learn with what sentiments of devotion, with what faith, hope, love, and humility, thou oughtest to draw near to the same Lord, on our altars, lying hid in the sacred mysteries. Learn also what extraordinary graces may be drawn from this inexhaustible source of all grace, as also how great the benefit is of His visiting mankind, by His "being made flesh, and dwelling amongst us;" and how powerful and effectual is the intercession of His Blessed Mother, for procuring from Him the greatest blessings to Christian souls.

3. Consider how the soul of the Virgin Mother was affected upon this occasion. She has expressed the sentiments of her heart in that admirable Canticle she then pronounced: "My soul," saith she, "doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His name." See, my soul in these words, as well as in the rest of that divine Canticle, the wonderful sense this Blessed Virgin had of the infinite goodness and mercy of God, in the great work of the Incarnation of His Son; her exceeding great joy in God, joined with love and praise on that occasion; her gratitude for having been freely chosen by the divine bounty, to be the happy instrument of God, in effecting that admirable work, and her most profound humility, in ascribing nothing to herself, but giving all the glory to God, admiring His wonderful ways, in choosing for so great a work so weak, so mean, so lowly an instrument as she esteemed herself. Learn, O my soul, to imitate these her sentiments.

Conclusion. Give thanks to our Lord for all His wonders wrought at this visitation, and for the many visits with which He so frequently favours thee. Beware, lest any want of correspondence on thy part deprive thee of thy share in the great blessings and graces, which He usually imparts to such souls as properly receive His divine visits.

JULY 3.

On the good employment of Time.

1. Consider how great a treasure time is when well employed. Every hour of it is of far greater value than all the kingdoms of the earth; because in every hour of it, if well employed, we may purchase an eternal kingdom in heaven; but all the kingdoms of the earth together are not able to purchase for the dying sinner one hour of time, in his greatest want of it. It is then that sinners will begin to be convinced of the value of time and of the infinite importance of employing it well, when they shall see themselves upon the brink of eternity, and when there shall be no more time for them. But what would not the damned in hell give for one of these hours? And how well would they not employ it, if it could be allowed them? But alas! they would not work whilst the time was, whilst they had daylight before them; and now the dismal and eternal night has overtaken them, in which there is no time to work, and in which they shall, with bitter but fruitless repentance, eternally condemn their past

folly and madness, in mis-employing and squandering away during life so much precious time. Christians, let us learn to be wise at their expense!

2. Consider the strict obligation incumbent upon us all, of employing our time to the best advantage. Time is not our own; it belongs to our Maker, it is lent us by our Lord and Master. The servant is strictly bound to employ his time in the service of his master; he is both an idle and a wicked servant if, being hired to work, he spends his time in play. What must we then think of ourselves, if being made and sent into this world by our great Master for nothing else but to spend the short time of our mortal life in serving Him and doing His will, we squander it away in empty amusements, worldly diversions and vanities; or in doing our own will rather than His? Christians, deceive not yourselves; such crying injustice as this calls to heaven for vengeance; wasting and destroying so much of your Master's precious time will never pass unpunished. If you are to be accountable for every idle word, how much more for every idle hour? Reflect how much it cost your dear Redeemer to purchase for you this time. By sin you had forfeited your life, and consequently your time, and incurred the guilt of a double death; and whatsoever time God has allowed you since your sin, has been purchased by the blood of Christ, in order to your repentance and a new life. It has cost Him an infinite price, it belongs to Him; alienating it from Him is robbery, it is sacrilege, it is perverting to your greater damnation what He purchased for your salvation.

3. Consider the immense treasures of grace, and everlasting glory, that may be stored up by a good employment of time. There is not one moment of all the time of this mortal life, in which, if well employed, we may not purchase a new degree of eternal bliss. Now every degree of eternal bliss is infinitely more precious and more desirable than all the riches and all the kingdoms of the earth. What a loss is it not then to lose any of these happy moments! it is losing so many immense and eternal treasures. A loss so great that if the happy state of the blessed in heaven could admit of any such thing as grief, they would certainly regret, to all eternity, those moments of the time of their mortal pilgrimage which they had not employed to the best advantage; when they shall clearly see, in the light of God, what an immense increase of eternal glory and happiness they might have acquired, by the due employment of all those precious moments.

Conclusion. Have ever before thy eyes the infinite advantages that are to be found in employing well thy time, and the strict obligation thou hast of spending it in the service of thy Maker; according to His ordinance, and agreeably to the end for which He sent thee hither, and for which He gives thee all thy time

And ever remember, that in His account all that time will be considered as idly spent and squandered away that has not been dedicated to doing His will.

JULY 4.

On remembering Four last Things.

1. Consider those words of the wise man (Ecclus. vii. 40), "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin;" and reflect how true it is that the memory of the four last things has a wonderful efficacy to restrain the soul from sin, and to take off the heart from affection to it. The remembrance of death, the view of the grave, the coffin, the shroud, the worms, and the speedy corruption of that body of ours; the serious and frequent consideration of the necessity of quickly parting with all that we love in this world, and of being forsaken and presently forgotten by all, must needs humble our pride and vain-glory, abate our fondness for this world and its deluding toys, check our sensual and carnal inclinations, and keep our passions under. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," can never endure the sight of the grave. But when we look beyond the grave, and meditate at leisure on the strict account we must one day give to an all-wise, all-powerful, and most just Judge, who cannot endure iniquity; when we consider that His eye is ever upon all our thoughts, words, and works, and that they are all to be weighed in the scales of divine justice, and according as they are there found, we are to be rewarded or punished for endless ages, and to be either infinitely happy, or infinitely miserable; how is it possible that, in the midst of such considerations as these, we should dare to sin!

2. Consider that the remembrance of the four last things wonderfully serves to correct the errors of worldlings, to open their eyes to truth, and to shut them to vanity. The transitory things of this world, its goods and its evils, as we call them, are apt to make a great impression upon our poor souls, shut up as they are in this earthly prison. We take them for something; we are fond of honours, riches, and pleasures, as if they were solid goods; and we are afraid of contempt, poverty, and pain, as if they were real evils. But meditating on our last end undeceives us; it quickly convinces us that all is as nothing that passes with time; that nothing is truly great but what is eternal; that those things deserve not the name of goods that contribute nothing to make us either good here, or happy hereafter; and that those are no evils which help to bring us to an infinite good. In fine, as to all the false maxims of the world, and the prevailing opinions and practices of its unhappy slaves and their abettors,

this kind of consideration on the last things exposes the folly and madness of them all, and sets them in such a light as to determine the soul to adhere no longer to such perverse and erroneous notions as will certainly be changed at death, condemned at the last judgment, and, if not recalled in time, punished in hell for all eternity.

3. Consider the manifold fruits which have been heretofore and are daily produced by serious consideration of the four last things. Even the most hardened sinners have often been converted from their wicked ways to a penitential life by the terror of those awful truths—death, judgment, hell, eternity. Preaching, reading, and meditating on these truths has sent numbers into deserts or religious houses, to secure their eternal salvation by a saintly life; and such considerations as these have generally laid the first foundations even to the most eminent sanctity. What lessons may we not learn among the silent monuments of the dead, who made some noise heretofore in the world, but now are thought of no more! What lectures, what instructions, what exhortations, may we not daily receive, by attending in spirit the trials at the great bar; by going down, whilst we are alive, into the darksome dungeons below, and viewing at leisure what is doing there, and by ascending into heaven and contemplating those happy mansions of eternal bliss, prepared for the reward of the momentary labours and sufferings of the servants of God? Oh, let us daily frequent these schools.

Conclusion. Make it thy practice to think often on these important subjects which so nearly concern thy everlasting welfare. It will be a sovereign means to prevent an unprovided death; it will teach thee to be always in readiness for judgment; it will keep thee out of hell, and bring thee to heaven.

JULY 5.

On the Certainty of Death.

1. Consider that there is nothing more certain than death. "It is appointed for all men once to die, and after that, judgment" (Heb. ix. 27). The sentence is general, it is pronounced upon all the children of Adam (Ecclus. xli. 5). Neither riches, nor dignity, nor strength, nor wisdom, nor all the power of the world, can exempt any one from this common doom. From the first moment of our birth we are hastening towards our death; every moment brings us nearer to it. The day will come when we shall never see the night; or the night will come when the sun will rise no more to us. The day will most certainly come when thou, my soul, who art reading these lines, must bid a long farewell to this cheating world and all thou hast admired therein, even to thy own body, the individual companion of thy life, and take thy

journey to another country, a strange and unknown land to thee, where all thou settest a value on here will appear like smoke. Learn, then, to despise these perishable things, and to set thy heart on nothing, since all must be taken away by death.

2. Consider that death is not only certain, but, generally speaking, much nigher than we imagine. If ever we look upon death, it is generally with the wrong end of the perspective glass that removes the object to a greater distance, when, indeed, it is very near. We are apt to flatter ourselves, like the worldling in the gospel (Luke xii.), with the expectation of many years' enjoyment of our worldly goods and pleasures, and, when we least suspect it, we are called away; we must suddenly be gone. "Thou fool," saith our Lord, "this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Thousands are dying this very hour throughout the world, and perhaps not one of them but expected to live many more years. We daily hear of sudden deaths; we hear of young and strong people carried off by short sicknesses in the very flower of their age, and why will we deceive ourselves? why will we vainly imagine ourselves out of the reach of these arrows of death that are falling so thickly on all sides of us? "Ah! fool, why dost thou think to live long, when thou art not sure of one day?"—Kempis.

3. Consider the blindness and stupidity of mortals who think so little of death, and live as if they were always to be here; and thus expose themselves every day to the dreadful danger of dying in their sins. And yet, alas! all this while they cannot be ignorant that death is continually following them at their heels; they even carry it about with them in the frail composition of their mortal frame. All things about them, by their continual fading, remind them of their mortality. They daily see or hear of deaths or burials, or meet with the monuments of the dead, who, from their silent tombs, cease not to admonish them, in the words of the wise man (Ecclus. xxxviii.), "Remember my judgment: for thine also shall be so; yesterday for me, and to-day for thee." O my soul, do thou at least give ear to this admonition; keep death always before thy eyes, and, when it comes, thou shalt have nothing to fear.

Conclusion. Since thou must quickly be gone hence, set thy house in order, and make all necessary provision for that long journey thou must shortly take, and ever strive to be such in life as thou desirest to be found in death.

JULY 6.

On the Uncertainty of the Time and Manner of our Death.

1. Consider that death is the passage from time to eternity. If we die well, it will be well with us for all eternity; but if we die

ill, it will be ill with us for endless ages; so that upon this one moment of death depends a long eternity. But when shall this moment come; when shall we die? Shall it be this night or to-morrow? Shall it be a week, a month, a year hence? Of all this we know nothing, only that it will be when we least look for it. For our Lord has assured us that He shall come like a thief in the night; that is, when we least think of it (Luke xii.). And, therefore, He tells us we must always watch and be ready, for if we are surprised and die in our sins, we are lost for ever.

2. Consider that we are not only ignorant of the time of our death, but of all other circumstances relating to it. We neither know the place where we shall die, nor the manner how we shall die; nor whether our death shall be violent or natural, by fever or consumption, gentle or sharp, of quick despatch, or more lingering, at home or abroad; whether our last illness shall deprive us of our senses or no; whether we shall have the assistance of our ghostly Father, and the help of the sacraments or no; what dispositions our souls shall then be in; or what ability we shall then have to make proper use of those last moments upon which our all depends for eternity. Alas! all these things are quite hidden from us; no wit, no learning, no wisdom upon earth can help any man to the knowledge of any one of them. Let this dreadful uncertainty of all the particulars that relate to our death determine us to live always in expectation and preparation for death, that we may not have that great work to do at a time when we shall have no convenience or ability to do it.

3. Consider that death being so certain and the time and manner of it so uncertain, it would be no small satisfaction to a poor sinner if he could die more than once; that so, if he had the misfortune once to die ill, he might repair the fault by taking more care a second time. But, alas! we can die but once, and when we have set our foot within the gates of eternity, there is no coming back, and if it be a miserable eternity into which we have stepped, there is no redemption; we pass from death to a second death, to the very extremity of misery, without end or remedy. How hard it is to do that well which we can do but once, and can never try or practise beforehand! My soul, see thou take care to study well this important lesson, by a continual preparation for death.

Conclusion. Make it the business of thy life to learn to die well. Remember there is no security against an evil death but a good life; everything else leaves thee exposed to dreadful uncertainties.

JULY 7.

On Preparing for Death.

1. Consider that preparing for death is a business of the utmost importance; it is the great business of life. We came

into this world, as pilgrims and travellers, to make the best of our way towards our true and everlasting home, a happy eternity. The great business of our whole life is to secure this happy eternity, and nothing else can secure it but a good death. This is the inevitable gate through which we must pass to eternal life ; if we think of arriving at it by any other way, we shall miss the road. A good death, then, must be the study and business of our whole life, which ought to be a preparation for it. Happy they who are continually preparing for it by a good life! Unhappy they who defer their preparation for their death-bed, and thereby put the issue of eternity upon the poor chance of a death-bed performance!

2. Consider the great but general error of men, who promise themselves to do great things of devotion and contrition when they are sick and like to die ; and upon the confidence of this, are often careless in preparing for death during the time of health. Alas! how strangely will they find themselves deceived! For if a small indisposition be at any time enough to spoil our devotion, what must a mortal illness be, when either the dulness and stupidity, caused by the distemper, or the anguish of body and mind scarce allow of any application of our thoughts to the greatest of all our concerns? My soul, see thou suffer not thyself to be thus imposed upon. Do now all thou art able ; prepare thyself now for thy last end, by daily and fervent acts of devotion and contrition ; every night strive to put thyself in the condition in which thou desirest to be found at thy death ; but never tempt God by designing to live in sin and to die in grace, or by expecting so extraordinary a miracle of grace as to pass from being a slave all thy lifetime to sin and Satan, to loving God above all things at thy death. No ; God is not to be mocked in this manner.

3. Consider that the best manner of preparing for death, is to die daily to our sinful inclinations and passions ; to the love of the world, of the flesh, and to our own unhappy self-love, the root of all other evils ; and this by means of mortification and self-denial. This is that great lesson, perpetually inculcated by the Son of God in the Gospel, of leaving all to follow Him, of disengaging our hearts from all things else, of renouncing our dearest affections for His sake, of denying and hating ourselves in this world, that so we may save our souls, and possess our God for ever in the world to come. How sweet, how happy, how secure, shall our death be, if it find us thus untied from the earth and all earthly clogs! How shall we then long for the wings of the dove, to fly away from this land of misery and sin, and to repose eternally in God!

Conclusion. Be ever preparing thyself for death, by refraining from all thou wouldst then wish not to have done ; and by living every day, and doing every work, as if it were to be the last of thy life, and thou shalt not fail to die happily.

JULY 8.

On the Sentiments we shall have at the Hour of our Death.

1. Consider how different a judgment the soul will make of things at the approach of death from that which she is apt to make in life ; how shall the world then turn upside down before her eyes ! My soul, how wilt thou then despise worldly honours and preferments, when thou shalt see thyself at the brink of the grave, where the worms make no distinction between the king and the beggar ! How little account wilt thou then make of the praise, esteem, or love of men, who will now think no more of thee ! How wilt thou then undervalue thy riches, when thou shalt see them slipping away from thee, and leave thee nothing but a coffin and a shroud ! How contemptible shall all worldly pleasures then appear in thy eyes, which at the best could never afford thee any true satisfaction, and now shall show what they really are, and dissolve into smoke ! Let us make the same judgment now concerning these things as we shall do then ! Let us weigh them all in these scales, and we shall not be cheated. Why should we set our affections upon such short-lived slippery toys ? Why should we admit of a love that cannot stand the test of death ?

2. Consider, my soul, what shall then be thy sentiments with regard to thy sins ; of which perhaps thou hast hitherto made but small account. How hideous, how odious, will they begin to appear to thee ; how numerous, how enormous, when the curtain shall be withdrawn with which thy self-love has industriously hidden them, or disguised the deformity and malice of them, and they shall be set before thy eyes in their true light ; when that false conscience, which thou hast framed to thyself, and under cover of which thou hast passed over many things in thy confessions as slight and inconsiderable, which thou wast ashamed to declare, or unwilling to forsake, shall no longer be able to maintain its ground at the approach of death ? What anguish, what remorse, what dread, what confusion, what despair, will invade a poor dying sinner, at the sight of this dreadful scene, of this army of his sins drawn up in battle-array against him ! Christians, let us be wise in time, and prevent so great an evil, by taking such precautions now, with regard to our sins, as we shall certainly wish to have taken then.

3. Consider what thy sentiments shall be at the time of thy death, with relation to the service of God, to virtue and devotion ? How lovely then shall the way of virtue appear to thee ! How wilt thou then wish to have always followed that path ! But what shall thy sentiments be with regard to the value of grace ? How bitterly shalt thou then regret the neglect of so many calls

and invitations of thy gracious God ; the loss of so many favourable opportunities of storing up eternal treasures, the squandering away so much of thy precious time, the misemploying of so many of God's gifts and talents, the abuse of the Sacraments. How many great, but disregarded, truths, shall then be unveiled to the sinner, against which he had shut his eyes before ! How shall the false reasonings of the world, the delusions of his passions, and the subtilties of self-love, together with the affected ignorance of such things as he had no mind to know, forsake him at the approach of death, and leave him in despondence at the time of his greatest distress ?

Conclusion. Enter into these sentiments now, with regard to all these things that shall stand by thee at the hour of thy death. For why shouldst thou any longer suffer thyself to be the dupe of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and give in to their impostures, with evident danger of the loss of thy immortal soul.

JULY 9.

On the Death of a Just Man.

1. Consider these words of the Royal Prophet (Ps. cxv.), "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." And reflect how true it is that the death of such as have served God in earnest, is both precious in the sight of God, and edifying in the eyes of men, because of those happy dispositions with which they meet death, especially that faith and confidence which they have in the goodness and mercies of their heavenly Father, and in the infinite merits of Jesus Christ their Redeemer, and that perfect conformity to the divine will accompanied with profound humility, a deep sense of sorrow for sin, and an ardent love of God, with which they close their eyes and yield up their souls into their Creator's hands. What a happiness it is for a dying man to be in these dispositions ! With what willingness does such a Christian leave the world ! What peace and tranquillity does he not find in his soul, from the testimony of a good conscience ! How joyfully does he fling himself into the arms of his tender Father, who, he is well assured, will never reject His loving children who cast their whole care upon Him ! Oh "let my soul die the death of the just, and let my last end be like to theirs !" (Numb. xxiii. 10.)

2. Consider what a comfort it is to a good man, at the approach of death, to see himself so near the end of his labours, of the miseries of this wretched life, and of all those dangerous conflicts and temptations to which he has hitherto been exposed, from those mortal enemies of his soul, the world, the flesh, and the devil ; and to find himself on the point of being delivered from

his long prison, from the body of this death, from the servitude of corruption, and from sin that surroundeth him on all sides in this vale of tears, and of being called home from his banishment to his true country, which he has always longed for. What a satisfaction it is to one who loves God, to see himself now at the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, where he is to see, love, and enjoy his God for ever! What a pleasure to look forward into that blessed eternity, into which he is just entering; and to sing with the Psalmist (Ps. cxxi.), "I rejoice at the things that are said to me, we shall go into the house of the Lord." "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord, they shall praise Thee for ever and ever" (Ps. lxxxiii.). To such souls as these, when they are near their death, those words of our divine Saviour are directed (Luke xxi. 28), "Look up, and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand."

3. Consider the particular providence of God, in favour of His servants at their death, expressed by the prophet (Ps. xl. 4) in these words: "The Lord helps them upon the bed of their sorrow, He turns all their couch for them in their sickness." He restrains their enemy at that time, He mitigates their fears and apprehensions, He supports them under their pains and agonies, He encourages them against the terrors of death and judgment, He protects them in that critical hour under the shadow of His wings, that they may be able to say with the Psalmist (Ps. xxii.), "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me." In fine, He never forsakes them in death who in their life have been faithful to Him, but more particularly helps them then, when they stand most in need of His assistance, and when all the world besides forsakes them. Blessed be His goodness for ever!

Conclusion. If thou desire to die the death of the just, live the life of the just, and do the works of the just; for, as thy works are during life, so also will thy death be. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." "From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, they shall rest from their labours, for their works follow them" (Rev. xiv. 13). See then that thy works be such as may make thy life holy, and thy death shall not fail to be happy.

JULY 10.

On the Death of the Wicked.

1. Consider that as nothing is more desirable than the death of the just man, by which he puts a happy conclusion to all the labours and miseries of that life we are leading here below, and enters into the never-ending joys of the Lord; so on the other hand nothing can be conceived more wretched, more dismal and

deplorable, than the death of the wicked. "The death of the wicked is very evil," saith the Holy Ghost (Ps. xxxiii. 22). It is very evil indeed, as often as they are unexpectedly hurried away in their sins, and go down in a moment into hell; it is very evil also, as often as they die hardened, and with little or no sense of God or eternity. But supposing neither the one nor the other to be the case, the death of the wicked is still very evil; from the torture of their conscience, from the sense of present misery, and the dreadful apprehension of a miserable eternity; and whatever way they look, all things seem to conspire against them, to denounce the judgments of God to them, and to set before their eyes a dismal scene of woe! How feelingly do they now experience that of the Psalm (cxiv.), "The sorrows of death have encompassed me, and the perils of death have found me!"

2. Consider, more in particular, the principal ingredients of this bitter cup, which the wicked, who will not think of it during life, are so often constrained to drink of in death. And first the remembrance of past sins, appearing now in quite other colours than they had represented them to themselves before; all staring them in the face, in their most ugly shapes, and with their united forces making a vehement assault upon them, to push them headlong into the bottomless pit of despair. How gladly would the dying sinner rid himself of this odious company! What would he not give to shake off from his breast this viper's brood of his own offspring! But all in vain, they will not be shaken off. How sensibly do they make him feel the gripe of their gnawing; not unlike that of the never-dying worm, which is one of the worst of the torments of hell! Then the remembrance of the graces they have so long resisted; of the opportunities of good they have so often neglected; of the talents they have buried; of the time they have squandered, one hour of which they cannot recal, though they would give ten thousand worlds for it; of their past abuse of the Sacraments, of the Word of God, and of prayer, those great means of salvation; and the little good they can find in their whole lives, to put in the scales against so much evil,—must add very much to their unspeakable anguish and distress, coming upon them at this sad time, when they have so little presence of mind, so little leisure, opportunity, or ability of doing anything themselves, and have too much reason to apprehend that God has forsaken them.

3. Consider what anguish it is to the dying sinner to see himself violently torn away from all those things he had set his heart upon in this world. "O cruel death," shall he then say, "dost thou make so bitter a separation?" (1 Sam. xv. 32.) What sad farewells will he be then constrained to bid to his honours, riches, pleasures, and all other worldly enjoyments; to his friends, kindred, house, and family, together with the whole world; and his own body too; in order to depart into an un-

known country, and to take nothing with him thither but his works, which he would gladly leave behind him. How does the sight of all about him, whether of wife, children, or worldly goods, which he has loved more than his God, serve for nothing but to increase his misery! And if, to change the melancholy scene, he endeavours to divert his thoughts from the remembrance of his past extravagances and present miseries, and to look forward, he meets there with still more frightful objects, from the just apprehension of what will follow after death; what hands he shall fall into then; what a severe trial he must immediately go through, and what the sad consequence must be, if he be there cast. Alas! he sees himself just launching forth, with all his evil, into eternity, an immense ocean, whose farther shore the poor sailor can never reach, and which he has too much reason to fear will be to him an eternity of woe.

Conclusion. Lead a virtuous life, and thou shalt have no share in this dismal scene of evil which attends the death of the wicked.

JULY 11.

On the Condition of the Body after Death.

1. Consider that the soul is no sooner departed from the body but this wretched carcass she leaves behind becomes pale, stiff, loathsome, and frightful; insomuch that the dearest friends of the deceased can scarce endure to watch one night in the same room with it, and would not be induced by any consideration to lie in the same bed. Even the greatest beauties now turn ugly and hideous; and their former admirers can no longer bear the sight of them. We read that St. Francis Borgia was so touched with the ghastly countenance of the corpse of the Empress Isabella (whom he had seen a little while before in all her majesty and beauty), seeing the sad change that death had wrought in her, that he conceived upon the spot, disgust for this world, and a happy resolution of wholly consecrating himself to the love and service of that great King who never dies. Oh, that the like consideration of the dismal change that death shall so quickly make in all mortals might effectually move us to the like resolution!

2. Consider that a person is no sooner dead, but the body begins to corrupt, and in a very short time becomes so insupportable, that surviving friends are obliged to make haste to get it out of the house, and to lay it deep under ground that it may not infect the air. And were the grave, after some weeks, to be opened, and this carcass be brought to view, what filthy carrion should we meet with! what a sight would it afford! And what should we think of a person that should be tied down to

such a companion, a barbarity said to have been exercised by a certain tyrant in binding the living to the dead, and letting perish in these noisome embraces? Surely the worst of torments would not be half so insupportable. So foul, so detestable a thing is a corpse that is half putrefied. O mortals, why will you then not remember what your composition is, and what you are quickly like to come to? O filth and corruption, why wilt thou be proud!

3. Consider what companions, what attendants, these bodies of ours must meet with in the grave. No others than worms and maggots, or such like foul insects. "Under thee shall the moth be strewed, and worms shall be thy covering" (Isa. xiv. 11). For these, O man! thou art preparing a banquet, when thou art pampering thy body. These are to be thy inheritance, or rather they are to inherit thee: whatever thou art to-day, to-morrow thou art to be the food of worms. See here, vain worldlings, what will soon be the end of all these beauties you are so fond of, and who are so apt to draw you into sin; filthy maggots shall very shortly prey upon these pretty faces.

Conclusion. Make small account of the beauty of the body, or of anything else that death can take away, and turn thy thoughts towards the better part, by laying up immortal riches for thy immortal soul, and procuring for her such ornaments of Christian virtues as may be out of the reach of death.

JULY 12.

On the Soul's first entering into another World.

1. Consider how the soul in death shuts her eyes to this world, and to all persons and things she has known here, never to take any more part in the transactions of this life, and immediately opens them to a new and surprising scene, quite strange to her, in a region of spirits, an unknown land, of which before she had no idea. She awakes, as it were, out of a dream, which leaves both hands and heart empty; all is over with her as to this world, she is estranged for ever from all conversation of mortals; no one of her dearest friends can accompany her, now she finds herself abandoned by all, and, what is most frightful, encompassed with infernal furies, that use their utmost efforts to lay violent hands upon her. Good God! who shall protect us at that hour from our mortal enemies?

2. Consider the immense difference there is found at this time between the souls of the servants of God and the souls of the wicked. For although both the one and the other are to expect that the common enemy with all his hellish forces will exert himself on this occasion, and do his worst to get their souls into

his claws, yet the servants of God are defended from his assaults by the care of their guardian angels, and under cover of their wings go forward with joy and security, being also encompassed on all sides with their good works, as with a strong rampart, which both keeps the devil at a distance. and gives them a comfortable assurance of coming off well at their trial. Whereas the wicked, that have made no such provision for themselves, shall now lie at the mercy of the infernal spirits, having nothing else to carry with them to the bar but the consciousness of their past crimes, which shall be more terrible to them than the devil himself. My soul, let us at least be more wise, and take care, whilst we have time, to lay up for ourselves a store of good works ; and thus make ourselves friends to stand by us at the hour that is to decide our eternal doom. Such as these will be friends, indeed, that will never forsake us, but will effectually plead our cause at the bar, where no other eloquence shall be regarded.

3. Consider in what a wretched plight poor worldlings shall find themselves now, who have provided no such friends as these to plead for them, who have seldom or never thought of this hour, but have lived as if they were never to die. Alas! what will all their honours, riches, and pleasures avail them now? Where is now their state and retinue? Where are all their servants and attendants? What is become of the multitude of their flatterers and visitors? See how they have left them all alone in the evil day, and whatever way they look for help or comfort they meet with none, their time is past, they are hurried away to be immediately tried at the dreadful bar of a just Judge, and all things, both within and without, declare to them the horrible sentence that is going to fall upon their heads for eternity. Sweet Jesus, preserve me from ever having any part in so dismal a tragedy!

Conclusion. Live now in such a manner as to have no reason to apprehend this scene of evils, which shall terrify the sinner at his departure hence, but that thy passage into eternity may be to the gate of a life that knows no death. Take care to carry nothing with thee hence that may give the enemy any hold of thee then.

JULY 13.

On the Particular Judgment.

1. Consider that besides the general judgment that shall be at the end of the world, there is a particular judgment passed upon the soul presently after death, according to that of the apostle, speaking of the time when we depart (1 Cor. v. 10). "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done,

whether it be good or evil." Thus we see in the case of Dives and Lazarus (Luke xvi.) that their doom was decided immediately after death, the one sentenced to the torments of hell, the other carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. See then, my soul, what thou art to look for as soon as thou art parted from thy body; thou must be presented before the judgment-seat of Christ, in order to give an account of thy whole life, even of all that thou hast thought, said, or done, and to receive sentence accordingly for life or death eternal, and the sentence that shall be passed then, shall be ratified in the general judgment at the last day. Reflect how thy accounts stand at present with thy God. What couldst thou be able to say for thyself if this night thou shouldst be cited at the bar? It may perhaps be thy case, for the Judge has long ago declared that He will come when thou least expectest Him. Take care then to be always ready.

2. Consider the qualities of this Judge, by whom we are to be tried after death. He is infinitely holy, and therefore cannot endure iniquity. He is infinitely wise, and therefore cannot be deceived; His all-seeing eye is ever upon all our ways; all the thoughts and motions of our hearts are naked and open to His sight, they are all recorded on His book, no one of them can slip His notice or memory. He is also infinitely powerful, and therefore there is no resisting or withstanding His judgment; no dignity, authority, strength, subtility, fraud, learning, or wit can be available at His tribunal. He made both great and little; king and beggar are equally His subjects, and there is no respect of persons with Him, nor appeal from Him. In fine, He is infinitely just, and therefore "will render to every man according to his works." No favour is to be expected then for sins unrepented of. The time of merit and of acceptable repentance will be at an end. Christians, let us think well on these truths whilst it is our day in which mercy reigns, let us clear up our accounts whilst we have time, let us wash away our sins with penitential tears, let us store up immortal treasures before the night overtakes us. All that we can then do will come too late.

3. Consider some other circumstances of this great trial, particularly the law by which we are to be tried; the accusers and witnesses that shall appear against us, and the nature of the sentence that shall be pronounced after the hearing of the whole cause. The law by which we shall be tried will be the commandments of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ; by this law, by these heavenly rules, we must stand or fall, these shall acquit or condemn us for eternity. Let us then study them well, and in practice conform our whole lives to them. Our accusers shall be the devils and the unhappy accomplices of our crimes, more especially such as we have drawn into sin, whose souls shall cry to heaven for vengeance against us. The witnesses shall be our own guilty conscience. And the sentence shall be an unchange-

able, irrevocable, eternal doom, either to heaven or hell. Let us remember these things, and we shall never sin.

Conclusion. Let thy whole life henceforward be a preparation for this great trial, and thou shalt not fail of a happy issue.

JULY 14.

On the Examination of the Soul in Judgment.

1. Consider, my soul, what an account will be here demanded of thy stewardship. For thou shalt be examined how thou hast discharged every branch of thy duty, both in general and particular to thy God, thy neighbour, and thyself? How thou hast employed all thy precious time? What use thou hast made of the talents God intrusted thee with? In what manner hast thou corresponded with the graces thou hast received? What profit hast thou reaped from the Sacraments, from the Word of God, and from the favourable circumstances in which God placed thee? How hast thou acquitted thyself of the duties of thy calling? Poor wretch, what shalt thou be able to answer under so strict an examination, where thy all is at stake for eternity? "What shall I do," said holy Job (xxxi. 14), "when God shall arise to judge? And when He shall examine, what shall I answer?" Alas! who shall be able to endure His scrutiny, or to "answer one thing for a thousand! Lord, enter not into judgment with Thy servants; for in Thy sight no man living shall be justified" (Ps. cxlii.).

2. Consider that, at this great trial, the whole history of thy life shall be set before thee; all thy hidden sins, all thy sins of commission or omission, even to every idle word and every thought and motion of thy heart, shall be exposed in their true colours. What mountains of iniquity shall come to light, when the veil shall be removed which hides at present the greatest part of our sins from the eyes of the world, and even from our own, and it shall be said of us: Behold the man with all his works, behold all his abominations, behold all his pride and contempt of God! My soul, how shalt thou be able to bear such a sight? Let us, then, make it our study now to know our sins, and to efface them by penance whilst we have time, that they may not then appear in judgment and condemn us.

3. Consider that the poor soul shall not only be brought to a strict examination with regard to all the evil she has done, and to all the good she has left undone, during the time of her pilgrimage in this mortal body; but even all the good she thinks she has done, the very best of her works, her prayers, fasts, almsdeeds, confessions, and communions shall all be nicely sifted; as well with relation to the intention with which she has undertaken

them, as to the manner in which she has performed them. And all shall be weighed, not in the deceitful balance of the judgment of men, but in the unerring scales of the sanctuary; that is, of divine justice; in which the works that are most admired by deluded mortals, are often found to be of no weight at all. Alas! poor soul, what astonishment, what anguish, what confusion shall it be to thee, to see so many things rise up in judgment against thee, now charged upon thee as heinous sins, of which in thy lifetime thou hast made but small account; and to find at the same time that those good works with which thou wast in hopes the scales should be turned in thy favour, have either not been accepted for want of just weight, or have been corrupted and vitiated by pride or self-love?

Conclusion. Have always before thy eyes the exact account thou must one day give of every thought, word, deed, and omission of thy whole life. Remember they all pass from thy hands to the hands of God, to be recorded in His great book by which thou art to be tried; see thou order them accordingly.

JULY 15.

On the different States of departed Souls before the Last Day.

1. Consider that according to the issue of this trial in the particular judgment, shall be the condition of departed souls. For such as, like the rich glutton (Luke xvi.), shall be found at the time of their departure void of grace and charity—in a word, all such as have died in mortal sin—shall, like the rich glutton, be immediately buried in the flames of hell, where the worm never dies, and the fire is never extinguished. How strangely shall the men of riches, the great ones of this world, the ladies that have been slaves to pleasure, find their condition altered! A bed of fire, instead of their soft couches; the want of everything that can afford the least comfort, even to a drop of water, instead of their former affluence; insulting devils instead of servants and attendants, eternal torments for momentary satisfactions. In fine, they who could never brook the least thing contrary to their own humour, appetite, or will, now find themselves plunged into that bottomless pit, where they shall never know what it is to be indulged in any one desire or inclination. Oh! that the children of this world, the unhappy slaves of their passions and pleasures, would think of this whilst they have time!

2. Consider the very different condition of the souls of the children of God, after their departure hence. For as many of them as, like the martyrs and other saints, shall be found when they are presented before the Judge, without blemish of sin, or debt of punishment due to divine justice, on account of former

offences not sufficiently expiated ; shall be immediately translated to heavenly joys. "Their earthly house of this temporal dwelling is now dissolved, but they have a building of God ; a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven" (2 Cor. v. 1). "They are absent from the body but present with the Lord" (v. 8). They enjoy what the Apostle so much longed for, when he "desired to be dissolved and to be with Christ" (Philip. iii. 23). "They are now before the throne of God and in His temple, and He that sitteth on the throne dwelleth over them—and the Lamb leads them to the living fountains of waters" (Rev. vii. 15–17), even the happy waters of eternal life, which ever flow from the throne of God. "They follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (ch. xiv. 4), "and they live and reign with Him" (ch. xx. 4). "They even sit with Him on His throne" (Rom. iii. 21), "and exercise with Him power over the nations" (ch. ii. 26). See, Christians, if you will but dedicate yourselves in good earnest to the love of God during your short pilgrimage, what great things are prepared for you in your true country, and that immediately after your departure hence. "How little reason then have the true lovers of God, to apprehend a death that shall bring them in an instant to the very fountain-head of true and everlasting life ! What a happiness it is to close the eyes with which we see this world and mortals ; and to open them immediately to the sight of God and of Christ !"—St. Cyprian.

3. Consider that as all are to be tried after their departure by their works, and to be rewarded according to the works they carry with them to the judgment-seat of Christ ; so those whose dead works have not been fully expiated by penance, whose devotions and other good works have been full of imperfections, who have built only with wood, hay, and stubble, though not to the destroying of the foundation of the faith and grace of Christ, shall suffer loss in this fiery trial ; and instead of being admitted immediately into the presence of God in His heavenly temple, where nothing defiled shall enter, must wait till the dross they have carried with them out of the world be purged away, and they be fitted for the sight and enjoyment of their Soverign good. How few souls shall be found at their departure so pure, as to be qualified to fly immediately to the embraces of God ! How very few are there that carry with them no spot, no blemish, no debt, not even of an idle word, into the other world ; where, by the fixed decree of heaven, every soul shall be judged and rewarded according to what she carries hence !

Conclusion. Spare no pains now to rid thyself by penitential exercises of all thy stains and debts whilst thou art on the way, lest if thou leave them to be discharged in another world thou mayest be cast into that prison, of which it is written (Matt. v. 26), "Amen, I say to thee, Thou shalt not go out from thence, till thou pay the last farthing."

JULY 16.

On the Sufferings of Souls in the Middle State.

1. Consider that in this middle state of souls (which are neither so perfect and pure as to be at once associated with the angels and Saints in Heaven, nor yet so bad as to be condemned to that lower hell, out of which there is no redemption), these spirits in prison suffer much, from being kept at a distance from their God, the only true and Sovereign good. They are perfectly sensible now how infinite He is in Himself, in goodness, beauty, truth, and all perfections; and what an infinite happiness it is to be with Him and to enjoy Him eternally. All those created goods that before claimed any share in their affections are now vanished away, and their whole hearts are carried towards Him with such vehement longing as by us mortals can neither be expressed nor conceived, so that, being detained from Him in whom alone they can find repose, is unspeakable anguish to their souls. And what adds to their torture is the sense they now have of their sins; of all those stains which disqualify them for the enjoyment of their God; and of those unhappy debts that keep them at a distance from Him: which they resent with so great horror, that heaven itself would be no heaven to them if their sins were to follow them thither.

2. Consider that, besides these two kinds of suffering from the absence of God and the presence of sin, which are common (though not equal in degree) to all those imprisoned spirits, there are other torments inflicted on such as have been great debtors and negligent penitents; but all with just proportion to their sins. "They shall be saved," says the Apostle, "yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. iii. 15). But what kind of fire? A fire kindled by the wrath of God; a fire which shall penetrate their whole souls and burn without consuming, in some, for many years, in some, perhaps, even to the day of judgment! But because it is said they shall be saved, this fire is made light of, saith St. Austin (Ps. xxxvii.); but surely though they shall be saved by it, yet is this fire more grievous than anything a man can suffer in this life. Christians, see how much you are enemies of your own souls, when, for fear of hurting these sinful bodies, you neglect to punish your sins by mortification and penance, and thus reserve so much more fuel for this purging fire.

3. Consider that, however rigorous divine justice is, in the punishment it inflicts on account of sin, upon those souls that are in this state of fiery purgation, yet their condition admits of many comforts that are denied to the damned, and which make an immense difference between the one fire and the other. For, as these souls have departed this life in the state of charity and

grace, true penitents, though imperfect, they are here comforted with a good conscience, and with the assurance that they love God, and are loved by Him; they know that they are His children, and under His protection, and that their sufferings shall soon have an end (for all time is short), and shall terminate in the never-ending joys of a happy eternity. In the meanwhile, the love they have for God gives them perfect conformity with His blessed will, and a certain peace, content, and joy in all that they suffer, because such is His will; they even desire that divine justice should be satisfied, and lovingly embrace those flames that are to purify them from the rust of sin, and to fit them for Him. Happy should we be, if, under all our sufferings here, we entered into the like sentiments! Such a purgatory as this, of temporal sufferings endured with resignation, humility, and love, would go a great way towards purifying our souls from sin, and fitting them for heaven.

Conclude, since nothing impure can ever be united to the infinite purity of God till it be first thoroughly purged, either in this world or the next, to make it thy business to get thyself thoroughly purified here by penitential labours, by patience in suffering, and by fervour in the practice of all virtues, but especially of divine charity. For this will be to thee a far more easy, mild, and wholesome purgatory than the dreadful fire of the world to come.

JULY 17.

On the Terrors of the Last Day.

1. Consider that nothing can be conceived more terrible than the prospect the Scripture gives us of the last accounting day, with all the prodigies that shall go before it. The sun shall be darkened, the moon red as blood; the stars without light, and seeming to fall from the firmament; the earth shall be shaken with violent earthquakes; the sea swelling and roaring with unusual tempests; the elements all in confusion, and whole nature in disorder. "The great day of the Lord is near," said the prophet (Sophon. i. 14, 15), "it is near and exceeding swift:" "That day is a day of wrath, a day of tribulation and distress, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and whirlwinds." But what shall then be the thoughts of unhappy sinners who shall see themselves threatened with these frightful signs of divine indignation? Alas! they shall presently "wither away," according to the expression of the gospel (Luke xxi. 26), "for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world;" and through the apprehension of that tragedy, which shall suddenly follow after these frightful preludes.

2. Consider that these terrors shall chiefly affect the wicked, against whom they are levelled, so that "they shall begin to say to the mountains, Fall upon us, and to the hills, Cover us" (Luke xxiii. 30), "and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of their wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" (Apoc. vi. 16, 17.) But as for the true servants of God, who are His friends and children; when these things shall begin to come to pass, they are told (Luke xxii. 28) "to look up and to lift up their heads because their redemption is at hand." And surely the more they love God, and take to heart the interests of the glory of Christ, and the coming of His everlasting kingdom, the more will they rejoice at the approach of that day that shall be so glorious to Him, and so happy for all His elect. The day in which He shall be publicly acknowledged by the whole universe, for the great Lord and Judge of all, the day in which He shall finally triumph over all His enemies and make His servants sharers in His triumph and glory, the day in which He shall put an end to the usurpation of Satan, to the reign of sin and death, and send them all to their proper place, never to come out any more, the day in which He shall abolish for ever the corruption of the flesh, and all the errors and fooleries of a deluded and a deluding world, and shall establish the eternal reign of incorruption, justice, and truth. In fine, the day in which He shall wonderfully renew both heaven and earth, and bring all His servants into the never-ending joy of their Lord. O when shall that happy day come!

3. Consider that after all those frightful symptoms above rehearsed, of the last agony and final expiring of this sinful world, a fire shall come raging like a torrent, that shall at once involve all the kingdoms of the earth in devouring flames, sweeping off and consuming all it shall find upon the face of the globe, and reducing all to smoke and ashes. Where then, O ye worldlings, will be those painted toys you are now so fond of? Where will be your gardens and palaces? Where your gold and silver, your costly plate and jewels, your pompous equipages, and whatever else you seem to possess in this dream of your mortal life? Alas! these things shall end in smoke, and when you wake you shall "find nothing in your hands" (Ps. lxxv.). "O that men would be wise, and would understand, and provide for their last end!" (Deut. xxxii. 29.) Do thou at least, my soul, learn to be wise by the consideration of this last fire, that shall so suddenly put an end to all these worldly bubbles; and take care to provide for thyself by laying up treasure in heaven; where alone it shall be out of the reach of this fiery deluge.

Conclusion. Be always afraid of sin; fly from and abhor it above all evil, and thou shalt have nothing to fear at the last day.

JULY 18.

On the General Resurrection.

1. Consider that this world being now at an end, the Archangel shall sound the last trumpet, and with a loud voice shall call the dead to arise and come to judgment; this voice shall at once be heard over all the universe and obeyed; it shall pierce the highest heavens, and penetrate down to the lowest abyss of hell. At this voice, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, by the Almighty power of our great Creator, the children of Adam, from the first to the last, shall arise from the dust, and every soul shall be united to its own body, never more to part for eternity; that as the soul and body have, in this world, been partners in good or evil; so they may, in the world to come, be sharers also in reward or punishment. Christians, let the sound of this last trumpet always echo in your ears.

2. Consider the wonderful difference there shall be at the time of this general resurrection, between the bodies of the just and those of the wicked. The just shall rise in bodies most beautiful, purer than the stars, brighter than the sun, immortal and impassible; but the wicked shall rise in bodies suitable to their deserts, foul, black, hideous, and every way loathsome; immortal, it is true, but to no other end than to endure eternal torments. What an inexpressible torture shall it be to these wretched souls to be forced into such odious carcasses, and to be condemned to eternal confinement in such a horrid and filthy prison! Learn, then, my soul, to keep thy body pure from the corruption of carnal sins, lest otherwise it come to be at that day a sad aggravation of thy never-ending misery.

3. Consider with how much joy and delight the souls of the just shall be united to their bodies, which they have so long desired; and with what affection they shall embrace those companions and partners of all their labours, of their sufferings and mortifications; and now designed to share with them in the glory of the heavenly Sion, and to give no small addition to their everlasting happiness. But what dreadful curses shall pass at the melancholy meeting of the souls and bodies of the reprobate? Accursed carrion, shall the soul say, was it to gratify thee, and to indulge thy brutal inclinations, that I have forfeited the immortal joys of heaven? Ah! wretch, to give thee a filthy pleasure of a moment, I have damned both myself and thee to all eternity. O thrice accursed carcass, it is just that thou who hast been the cause of my damnation, shouldst be my partner in eternal woe! But oughtest not thou rather, O unhappy soul, to be a thousand times over accursed by thy body, since it was thy business, and was in thy power, to have subjected its passions and lusts to the rules of

reason and religion; and thou didst rather choose, for the sake of a momentary delight, to enslave thyself to sensual inclinations, and so to purchase hell both for thyself and for it? Christians, let us at least learn to be wise, and so keep both body and soul in good order here, that they may be eternally happy together hereafter.

Conclusion. Prevent the terrors that shall seize the wicked at that great summons of the last trumpet, which shall call the dead from their graves to go forth to meet the Judge; by giving ear now to another summons of the great trumpet of the Holy Ghost, calling upon thee by the Apostle (Eph. v. 14), "Rise, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead" (that is, from the death of sin to the life of grace), "and Christ shall enlighten thee." Thus by having part in the first resurrection, thou shalt provide in time against that great day when time shall be no more. Thus thou shalt escape the second death.

JULY 19.

On the Coming of the Judge.

1. Consider that the dead, being risen, shall immediately be assembled from all places, to meet the Judge: and this, it is thought, near Jerusalem, in sight of Mount Olivet and of Calvary, where our Lord shed His Blood for our redemption. What a sight will it be to behold all the children of Adam, an innumerable multitude of all nations, ages, and conditions, standing together, without distinction of rich or poor, great or little, master or servant, monarch or subject, excepting only the distinction of good or bad, which shall be wonderful and eternal! Alas! how mean a figure shall an Alexander or a Cæsar make at this appearance; or any of those celebrated heroes of antiquity, whose very name has made nations tremble! Those mighty monarchs, who had once the world at their beck, are now levelled with the meanest of their slaves, and would wish a thousand times they had never worn the diadem. And hast thou, my soul, ever well considered the part thou shalt have to act in this last scene?

2. Consider how the great Judge shall make His appearance, and every eye shall see Him coming down from heaven, with great power and majesty; armed with the terrors of His justice, and surrounded by His heavenly legions. How different from His first coming, shall His second appearance be! His first coming was with wonderful meekness and humility; because that was our day, in which He came to redeem us by His mercy; but at His second coming, it shall be His day, in which justice shall revenge upon sinful man the cause of His injured mercy,

with a final vengeance once for all. Ah, miserable sinners! how shall you be able to stand before His face, or bear His wrathful countenance? How shall you not wish to hide your guilty heads, even in the lowest hell, rather than endure His dreadful appearance? But all in vain; you must abide it.

3. Consider how upon this occasion the royal standard of the Cross (the sign of the Son of Man) shall be carried before the Judge, shining more brightly than the sun, to the unspeakable comfort of the good, and the intolerable anguish and confusion of the wicked; for having made so little of the inestimable benefit of their redemption. Here they shall plainly see what their God has suffered for their salvation, and how great has been His love for them; that boundless and unparalleled love which brought Him down from His throne of glory and nailed Him to the Cross. How shall they now condemn their past obstinacy in sin, with all their blindness and ingratitude! How shall this glorious ensign justify, in the face of the whole universe, the conduct of God, and the dreadful torments He has prepared for unrepenting sinners! For what less than a miserable eternity can be punishment enough for so much obstinacy in sin, after so much goodness and love?

Conclusion. Take care, whilst thou hast time, to make a proper provision for this great appearance, by turning to God with thy whole heart, and embracing a penitential life; for why shouldst thou go on any longer, adding sin to sin, and "treasuring up to thyself wrath against this day of wrath!" (Rom. ii. 5.)

JULY 20.

On the Separation of the Good from the Bad.

1. Consider how the Sovereign Judge, being seated on His glorious throne, attended by millions of millions of angels, in their different orders and hierarchies, shall give His command, which shall be instantly obeyed, for the final and eternal separation of the good from the bad; after which these two companies shall never, never more meet. Then shall all the true servants of God "be caught up in the clouds, to meet Christ in the air" (1 Thess. iv. 16); and shall be placed with honour on His right hand, and such of them as, like the Apostles, have in their lifetime quitted all things to follow Him, shall take their seats with Him, as judges both of angels and men (Matt. xix. 25; 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3). But the wicked together with the devils, whom they have followed, shall be driven with ignominy to the left hand. And thou, my soul, where dost thou expect to stand at that day? In which of these two companies shalt thou be ranked? Thou hast

it now in thy choice; but shalt not have it then. Choose, then, "in this thy day, that better part which shall never be taken from thee" (Luke x.).

2. Consider what shall then be the thoughts of the grandees of the world, of the rich, of the worldly-wise, of the great heroes, of the fine ladies, when they shall see the poor in spirit, the meek, the humble who were so contemptible in their eyes in this mortal life, now honoured and exalted, and crowned with immortal glory, dignity, strength, and beauty; but themselves depressed to the lowest extremity of disgrace, contempt, and irremediable want of all things. What horror, what confusion, what envy, what rage, shall oppress their souls to see this strange catastrophe! What shall then be their sentiments regarding those empty toys they were so fond of in their mortal life! How shall they condemn their own madness, in having set their hearts upon lying follies, to the eternal loss of their immortal souls! How shall they wish, a thousand and a thousand times, they had followed the examples of the Saints, and walked in the paths of virtue and devotion!

3. Consider in what manner the sentiments the wicked shall have on this occasion are expressed by the spirit of God (Wisdom v.), "These seeing it" (viz., the glorious exaltation of the just) "shall be troubled with horrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddeness of their unexpected salvation; saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they, whom we had heretofore in derision, and for a parable of reproach; we fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour; behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the Saints. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us; and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us; we wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction; and we have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known. What has pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on, and as a ship that passeth through the waves, whereof, when it is gone by, the trace cannot be found—so we, being born, forthwith ceased to be, and have been able to show no mark of virtue, but are consumed in our wickedness." Christians, mark well these speeches of the reprobate, and take effectual measures whilst you have time, that their misfortunes may never be yours.

Conclusion. "Fly now from the midst of Babylon:" by standing off from the corruption and infection of a wicked world; and separating yourselves from the society of the wicked in time, that you may not be involved in their eternal misery.

JULY 21

On the Opening of the Books.

1. Consider that we read in the Word of God of the opening of the books, when God shall sit down to judge (Dan. vii.): "I beheld," saith the prophet, "till thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days sat down. Thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him: the judgment-seat and THE BOOKS WERE OPENED." And (Rev. xx. 11. 12): "I saw a great white throne," saith St. John, "and one sitting upon it, from whose face the heaven and earth fled away, and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and THE BOOKS WERE OPENED; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works. Christians, attend to these awful truths; and think well on these books, by the contents of which you are to be judged. The study of these will be of infinitely more importance to you than the knowledge of all the books of human science, which must perish in the last fire.

2. Consider what these books are which shall be produced at the day of judgment. In the first place, there shall be the book of our conscience, with all the divine records, in which our thoughts, words, and actions, are punctually registered. In the second place, the book of the Gospel, of the rule of life prescribed by Jesus Christ, and of the commandments of God. And lastly, the book of life; even that book, in the first line of which it is written of Jesus Christ (Ps. xxxix.), that He should come "to do His Father's will;" and in which the names of all stand recorded under the name of Jesus Christ, who with Him and through Him have made it the main business of their lives to do the will of Him and of His Father, and who have embraced the law of His love in the midst of their hearts. Christians, examine yourselves now by these books, judge yourselves now by them, and all shall be well with you then. See how your accounts stand in your own consciences; but beware of the delusions of self-love. Reflect how all your thoughts, words, and actions, in the moment they go from you, are enrolled in the divine book. In what condition are yours to appear there? Shall your life be able to stand the trial of the book of the Gospel? Or shall not rather your faith rise up in judgment against you, and condemn you for having renounced in practice what you professed to believe? Has your name any place in the book of life, where none are entered but such as do the will of God?

3. Consider how, upon the opening of these books, the sins of the reprobate shall not only appear in their most odious shapes to

their own eyes, but also be exposed to the view of that immense assembly of all heaven and earth ; visible and evident to the eyes of all, both angels and men, good and bad. Ah ! poor sinner, where shalt thou then hide thy head ! What shame, what anguish, shall oppress thee, when all thy abominations, all thy works of darkness which thou hast committed in the greatest security, and which thou wouldst not have had known to thy friends and acquaintances for all the world, and, perhaps, couldst not find in thy heart to disclose, even to one person, tied by all laws to an eternal secrecy, shall now be displayed before thy face with all their aggravating circumstances in this great consistory of the whole universe ?

Conclusion. Prevent, by a hearty repentance and a sincere confession of thy guilt now, whilst thou hast time, the dreadful confusion which otherwise thou shalt suffer at that day : and the great Judge shall then ratify the absolution that has been given thee here by virtue of His commission, and clear thee from all thy sins.

JULY 22.

On the Conversion of St. Mary Magdalene (Luke vii.).

1. Consider the sudden and wonderful change God was pleased to work in the heart of this glorious penitent. "Behold a woman in the city that was a sinner" (says St. Luke), "when she knew that Jesus was at meat in the house of the Pharisee, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and, standing behind at His feet, she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head ; she kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment" (Luke vii. 37, 38). See here a penitent indeed ; thoroughly penetrated with the sense of the dreadful evil of her sins, and, therefore, not to be restrained, either by shame or fear, or any consideration of what the world would think or say, from hastening to her Saviour, though then at table in the midst of the Pharisees, and there doing public penance without regard to their censures or contempt. See what it is for a soul to have her eyes truly opened to the deformity of her sins and to view those odious monsters in their true shape, which have so long possessed her ! She thinks every moment an age, till, by running to our Lord, she can get rid of her guilt whatever it may cost her, or whosoever may scoff at or censure her for it.

2. Consider the chief ingredients in Magdalene's conversion ; her faith, her humility, her love, her penitential tears, and her dedicating to the service of her Lord all that she had before employed in sin. Her faith, joined with humble confidence in the goodness and mercy of her Saviour, appears in her running to Him to be washed and cleansed in the true fountain of life.

Her humility appears in her not daring to come before His face nor address herself to Him in words, but standing behind at His feet and speaking to His heart by floods of tears. Her ardent love shows itself in her often kissing His feet and in the penitential tears it produces, and is, therefore, taken notice of by our Lord as the main disposition towards her justification. "Many sins are forgiven her" (said He), "for she hath loved much" (ver. 47). And now her hair, her precious ointments, her whole person, are dedicated to her Saviour, to whom, from this time forward, she adheres with such inviolable fidelity and unalterable affection as not to suffer herself to be kept from Him, either by the ignominy of the cross or the horror of the sepulchre. See, sinners, what it is to be a perfect convert, a penitent indeed.

3. Consider the lessons all Christians may learn from Magdalene's conversion. And first, a sense of the wonderful mercy of God, who changes in an instant the greatest sinners into saints; that so we should never despair of the conversion of any one, nor presume to despise poor sinners, how abandoned soever, nor prefer ourselves before them, since whatever they are to-day, to-morrow they may be great penitents and favourites of heaven. Secondly, we must learn from this great example a ready compliance with the graces and calls of God; with courage and resolution to overcome the opposition we shall be sure to meet with in our return to God, from old habits, human respect, or any other considerations. Alas! if Magdalene had regarded the censures of the world or delayed her conversion for fear of what the Pharisees should say or think of her. in all appearance she would have died in her sins. Thirdly, we may learn by her example that the most effectual means for the remission of our sins and advancing our souls to the perfection of holiness is an ardent love of our blessed Redeemer and repentance influenced by love. Happy we if we can but learn of her to go daily in this penitential spirit to the feet of Christ: He never rejects a penitent sinner.

Conclusion. If thou hast followed Magdalene in her sins, imitate her in her conversion; and the more and the greater thy sins have been, make the greater return of love to Him who has so mercifully spared thee in thy sins, and so lovingly forgiven thee that immense debt which thou owedst to His justice.

JULY 23.

On the last Sentence of the Good.

1. Consider that the great assize of the last day shall be concluded by a definite sentence; by which the just, after a glorious rehearsal of their good works, shall be called up to a kingdom where sorrows never enter and joys never end; and the wicked

shall be condemned to the dungeons of everlasting fire. But first give ear, my soul, to that sweet and gracious invitation (which thou hopest shall be one day thine) by which our dear Lord shall call His servants, His friends, and His children, into the glorious mansions of eternal bliss. "Come, ye blessed of My Father," shall He say, "possess the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 8). O happy invitation! happy, thrice happy they, who shall be found worthy to partake of this joyful sentence! What unspeakable satisfaction and delight, what torrents of joy and pleasure, shall flow into their souls on hearing it! But, what envy, what rage shall possess the souls of the reprobates, when they shall hear this invitation, and shall see many of their own acquaintance going to take possession of that eternal kingdom, which they might also have so easily purchased, but by their folly and stupidity have blindly exchanged for the flames of hell!

2. Consider and weigh well at thy leisure the words of this happy sentence: Come, says the Judge, ye blessed of My Father. Come from the vale of tears, to the blissful regions of never-ending joys. Come from a tedious banishment, to your true heavenly country; from your mortal pilgrimage in the midst of crosses, labours, conflicts, and dangers to your blessed home, in the fair and lovely mansions of rest and peace, in the eternal Sion; where you shall meet with all that your hearts desire, to complete your happiness; where you shall be for ever inebriated by the plenty of My house, and drink for ever at the fountain of life. "Arise, My beloved, the winter is now past, the floods and storms are over, arise and come. Come, enter into the joy of your Lord; the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning;" a universal good, a blessing including all blessings, and extending to endless ages. My soul, learn thou to despise all other happiness, in hope of having a share one day, in this blessed sentence.

3. Consider that what is most to be admired and loved in this heavenly sentence is, that it brings our souls to an eternal union with God Himself, our only true and sovereign good. This "come," this sweet word of salvation, draws us to our God, unites us to Him, receives us into the very bosom of His goodness; and in a manner transforms us into Him. And nothing less could ever truly satisfy our souls! O happy blessing indeed, to be thus "blessed of the Father" by an eternal union with Him. Happy kingdom in which we shall live and reign with the ever-living God! "I rejoiced," said the royal Prophet (Ps. cxxi.), "at the things that were said to me; we shall go into the house of the Lord." But, my soul, how much more oughtest thou to rejoice at the happy prospect of being one day called, not only into the house of the Lord, but even to a union with the Lord Himself.

Conclusion. Spare no pains to secure to thyself this happy

sentence by diligence in all good works, more especially works of mercy and charity, which, according to the Gospel, are particularly calculated to ensure to us the sentence of the elect.

JULY 24.

On the last Sentence of the Wicked.

1. Consider how the great Judge, after having invited the just to His glorious kingdom, turning Himself towards the wicked on His left hand, with fire in His eyes, and terror in His countenance, shall thunder out against them the dreadful sentence of their irrevocable doom, in these words, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv.). O sinners! weigh well every word of this frightful sentence. Depart, saith He, go, begone for ever, from Me, far from the joys of My kingdom, and the society of My children, into the place you have chosen, and blindly preferred before heaven, into the dungeons of hell below, prepared for Satan and his associates, whose part you have taken against Me. O terrible excommunication, to be cut off for ever from the society of Jesus Christ and His saints! O cruel divorce, to be eternally separated from God and all that is good! O dismal and everlasting banishment, to be excluded from the city of God, and sent into the low and horrid region of the second death! Ah! wretches who make so little now of losing God, and His grace, by mortal sin; what shall you then think, when doomed to this eternal separation from the source of all good? But whither are you to go from Him? Alas! into everlasting fire, there to burn as long as God is God, in company of the devil and his angels. O dreadful eternity!

2. Consider that terrible and universal curse which this sentence of condemnation involves! "Depart from Me, ye cursed," says the sovereign Judge, as if He should say, You shall go from Me, but take My curse along with you. I would have given you My blessing, but you would not receive it; a curse you have chosen, and a curse shall be your everlasting lot. It shall cleave to you like a garment, which you shall never put off; it shall enter into your very bowels, and search into the marrow of your bones. A curse upon your eyes, never to see the least glimpse of comfortable light; a curse upon your ears to hear no other sound for all eternity, but frightful shrieks and groans; a curse on your taste, to be ever embittered with the gall of dragons; a curse on your smell, to be always tormented with the intolerable stench of the bottomless pit; a curse on your feeling, and on all the members of your body, to be for ever burning, and never to consume, in a

fire that shall never be quenched. O dreadful complication of irremediable evils!

3. Consider that this terrible curse shall be extended not only to the body, its senses and members; it shall also reach the soul and all its powers and faculties. As if the great Judge should also say: A curse upon your understanding, never to be enlightened with any ray of truth; a curse upon your will, never to attain to anything it loves or desires, but to be always bound down to what it hates and abhors; a curse upon your memory, to be ever revolving, in the bitterness of a fruitless repentance, the folly and vanity of those short-lived pleasures and worldly toys, for which you have forfeited a happy eternity; a curse upon your conscience, to be gnawed by the worm that never dies; a curse upon your whole soul, to be a hell to itself, ever torn to pieces with most violent passions, of fury, envy, hatred, and despair. Good God! let me never be so miserable as to incur this dreadful and irrevocable curse. But see how this sentence is no sooner pronounced, but the earth opens, and swallows at once this wretched multitude, with the devils that seduced them, into the lowest hell, and then the gate is shut upon them, never, never to be opened. O fatal consequence of worldly pride! O dismal end of carnal pleasures!

Conclusion. Turn to God with thy whole heart, and henceforward be faithful to Him; thus shalt thou secure to thyself a blessing at that day, instead of a curse.

JULY 25.

On St. James.

1. Consider that St. James, the son of Zebedee, the elder brother of St. John the Apostle, was one of those disciples to whom our Lord was pleased to show a more particular favour and love; he was one of the three chosen to be witnesses of the glory of His transfiguration; one of the three admitted to be present when He raised to life the daughter of Jairus; and one of the three whom He took to stay and watch with Him in His prayer and agony in the garden. How great must the faith and love of St. James have been that he should be such a favourite of Jesus! How happy are they who, like St. James, keep close to Jesus in His sorrows and sufferings, no less than in His joys and glory! The zeal and fervour of St. James, and of his brother St. John, in the cause of Christ, obtained for them from our Lord the surname of Boanerges, or sons of thunder. This glorious name they made good in their preaching and in their labours; and St. James, with this advantage, that he was the first of all the Apostles who laid down his life for the love of his Master,

and sealed His doctrine with his blood. O glorious death! to die for love, not of any worldly honour, of friends or country, but for the love of our Lord, the true and everlasting life. How happy are those sufferings that are endured for the love of Christ!

2 Consider, from the Epistle of this day (1 Cor. iv.), what kind of sufferings St. James and his fellow Apostles endured daily for the love of Christ, and with what patience and charity they supported them: "I think," says St. Paul, "that God hath set forth us Apostles, the last, as it were appointed to death; because we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake—we are weak—we are without honour. Even unto this hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no fixed abode; and we labour, working with our hands; we are reviled, and we bless; we are persecuted, and suffer it; we are ill spoken of, and we entreat; we are made as the refuse of the world, the offscouring of all even until now. See, Christians, in what manner the greatest favourites of heaven were treated by the children of the world. But no wonder, for their Master Himself was treated no better, and all that will reign with Him must be content to suffer with Him. Happy those crosses that bring the soul to the eternal enjoyment of her God!

3. Consider, from the gospel of this festival, that St. James and St. John, though they had been trained up for three years in the school of Christ, yet, before His Passion and death, and their receiving the Holy Ghost, had not yet perfectly put off the old man, or purged away the old leaven of ambition or self-seeking; and, therefore, they induced their mother to petition for them, that they might sit, one on the right hand of Christ, and the other on the left, in His kingdom. Christians, beware of ambition, beware of desiring to be honoured, praised, exalted or preferred before others; beware of the subtilties of pride and self-love; if it found its way even into the school of Christ (as it had done before, into the earthly paradise, and even into heaven itself), it is recorded as a warning for us, that so dangerous and subtle an evil may not make its way with greater ease into our unguarded souls. But hearken to the words of our Lord upon this occasion. "You know not," says He, "what you ask. Can you drink of the chalice that I shall drink?" How true it is that we know not what we ask, when we ask for honours, preferments, riches, or pleasures, which, instead of bringing us nearer to God, are too apt to carry us away far from Him! Drinking with Christ, of the chalice of His Passion; taking up our Cross, and following Him, is the true means of divine appointment which is to bring us to Christ, and entitle us to sit with Him on His throne, and reign eternally with Him.

Conclusion. Let it be thy great ambition to keep as close as

thou canst to thy Lord, with thy cross upon thy shoulders, by diligent working, suffering, and loving, and instead of pretending to high things, sit down by humility in the lowest place, and the highest shall be given thee.

JULY 26.

On St. Anne.

1. Consider that what gives us the highest idea of the super-eminent sanctity of St. Anne, and of her blessed consort St. Joachim, is, that they were chosen by the decree of Heaven to be the parents of that immaculate Virgin, who was to bring forth the Saviour of the world, to be the Mother of God. What graces did they not receive, to qualify them to furnish this Virgin Spouse to the Spirit of God, and this Virgin Mother to the Son of God! What a saint-like heavenly education did they not give to their blessed child! How perfectly did they make good that sentence of their divine Grandson, that "the tree is to be known by the fruit!" What reverence then, what esteem, what affection, what devotion do we not owe to this blessed couple! All the true children of Christ have ever loved His Mother, and considered her as their Mother; how then can we do otherwise than love these two great Saints to whom we stand indebted for such a Mother!

2. Consider, from the lesson read on the feast of St. Anne (Proverbs xxxi.), the properties of a valiant, that is, of a wise and virtuous woman, as all perfectly true of this great Saint; particularly her attention to do good, and not evil, all the days of her life; her unwearied industry in acquiring the spiritual riches of all virtues, and storing up treasure for eternity; her diligence in the exercise of works of mercy and charity. "Strength and beauty are her clothing," saith the wise man, "and she shall laugh in the last day" (when the foolish admirers of worldly vanities shall be sad and sorrowful). "She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue" (by being ever prudent in her words, and charitably compassionate in excusing the defects of her neighbours). "She hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle" (by serious application to keep herself always well employed, and to see that all under her charge are orderly). Such was St. Anne, such ought all Christian matrons to be; of such as these the Spirit of God adds, in the conclusion of the chapter, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her works praise her in the gates." Yes, the Lord Himself shall give her the eternal reward of the fruit of her hands; and the gates of the heavenly Sion shall resound with her praises for ever.

3. Consider, from the Gospel of this day, that excellent treasure which St. Anne found, and made her own, by giving up all things else to purchase it. "The kingdom of Heaven," says our Lord (Matt. xiii. 44), "is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which when a man hath found he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." The kingdom of heaven, in this and other passages of the Gospel, is understood of the kingdom of God within us, by His grace in the soul; that kingdom by which He lives and reigns in our interior, by faith, hope, and love, and the spirit of recollection and prayer. Now this kingdom of God in our souls is a treasure indeed, of infinite value, which enriches us by the possession of God Himself, here by grace, and hereafter in glory. This treasure is hidden from the children of the world, who are strangers to the value of it, and have a very mean idea of the happiness of a spiritual and interior life; but the children of God, whose eyes are open to the truth, discover this inestimable treasure, and spare neither pains nor cost to get it into their possession; they even sell all they have to purchase it; that is, they give up their humours, passions, worldly affections, sensual inclinations, their own will, and everything else that opposes so great a happiness; and thus they become God's kingdom. Thus they begin to enjoy a heaven upon earth.

Conclusion. Seek first the kingdom of God in thy soul, and all other things shall be added unto thee; thou shalt be reimbursed with infinite advantage, whatever thou hast expended in the purchase of it; and all good things shall come to thee along with it.

JULY 27.

On Hell.

1. Consider that it will be of no small service to keep thee from going down into hell after thy death, if thou wilt now, by serious meditation, go down thither whilst thou art alive, and take a view of that wretched place, by the help of those lights, which the unerring Word of God shall furnish thee with. Give ear then first to what is said of hell in the Old Testament: where it is called (Job x.) "A land" (from which there is no coming back) "dark, and covered with the obscurity of death, a land of misery and darkness; where the shadow of death and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth." And (Isa. xxx.) where it is called Topheth (from the name of that valley near Jerusalem, otherwise called Gehenna, where the idolaters burnt their children in sacrifice to the Devil), of which he says, "Topheth is prepared from yesterday, prepared by the King, deep and wide. The nourishment thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord as a

torrent of brimstone kindleth it." And what kind of torments are there prepared for the wicked, the same Prophet informs us (chap. xxxiii. 15), when he puts the question to them, "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? Which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" The wise man adds (Eccles. xxxi.), "That there are spirits that are created for vengeance, and in their fury they lay on grievous torments; in the time of destruction they shall pour out their force, and shall appease the wrath of Him that made them. Fire, hail, famine, and death, all these were created for vengeance; the teeth of beasts and scorpions, and serpents."

2. Consider what a description our Lord has given us of hell in His Gospel; where he calls it "the Gehenna of fire, or the fiery Gehenna" (Matt. v.). "A fire that cannot be quenched, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished, and where every one shall be salted with fire" (Mark ix.). "An eternal fire and everlasting punishment" (Matt. xxv.). "A place of torments in flames, where the wicked shall not be allowed even so much as one drop of water to cool their tongue" (Luke xvi.). "A furnace of fire where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xiii.). "Binding hand and foot, and casting into exterior darkness" (Matt. xxii.). To which St. John adds (Rev. xiv.), "That the damned shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone; and that the smoke of their torments shall ascend for ever and ever; and that they have no rest day or night." And (Rev. xx.),—"That they shall be cast into the pool of fire and brimstone," which is the second death. To which St. Jude adds, "darkness and everlasting chains" (ver. 6); and St. Paul (2 Thess. i.), "That they shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction, from the face of the Lord."

3. Consider what a scene of misery and woe is set before our eyes in these texts of Holy Scripture; what a compilation of all the worst of evils, and all of them eternal; how many bitter ingredients of this cup of the divine wrath, of which the wicked must drink in hell for evermore. Take a view of them, my soul, at thy leisure, that the sight of them may implant in thee wholesome fear of sin, the only evil that can condemn thee to that place of torments. Consider well this dying life, or rather this living death of the damned; this darksome land; these dungeons of horror and misery; this binding hand and foot in eternal chains; this pool of fire and brimstone; this salting with fire; these devouring flames which always burn, yet never consume; this feeling ever fresh for sufferings; these gnawing serpents; this worm that never dies; this dreadful second death; this eternal separation from God and all that is good; this perpetual weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and that all this is endured in the company of devils and other wretches, all hating and cursing one another; all hating and blaspheming God. And

that these insupportable sufferings are to be without end, intermission, or remission. Such is hell according to Holy Writ; according to God's infallible Word. Who can bear the least part of it? Shall Christians, who believe the Word of God, dare to sin?

Conclusion. Seeing thou canst endure so little here, take the most effectual means, whilst thou hast time, to keep thyself from coming into this place of torment. The fire of hell can burn nothing but wilful sin. Get rid of the enormous evil, and hell can have no hold on thee.

JULY 28.

Some other Considerations on Hell.

1. Consider that as it is said in Holy Writ (1 Cor. ii. 9), that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him;" so we may say also with truth that neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of any mortal to conceive what dreadful torments are prepared in hell for obstinate sinners who wilfully die enemies of God. The Almighty is infinite in all His attributes; as in His power, wisdom, goodness, so in His avenging justice too. He is God in Hell as much as in Heaven; so that, by the greatness of His love, mercy, and patience here, we may measure the greatness of His wrath and vengeance against impenitent sinners. By His pure goodness and love He has drawn them out of nothing, and made them for Himself and a happy eternity; He has preserved and sustained them for a long time, ever loading them with benefits; He has even come down from His throne of glory to seek them when gone astray; He suffered Himself to be nailed to a disgraceful cross for their eternal salvation; He has frequently delivered them from dangers to which they were exposed; has patiently borne with their repeated insolence and treasons; graciously inviting them to return to Him by repentance, and offering them His mercy and all good both for time and eternity. How justly, then, does His patience and goodness, after being so long abused, turn into anger! His mercy at length gives place to justice; and a thousand woes to those wretches that must for ever feel the dreadful weight of the avenging hand of the living God.

2. Consider that beatitude is defined "a perfect and never-ending state of happiness, comprising at once all that is good without any mixture of evil." If, then, damnation be the opposite to beatitude, it must needs be an everlasting deluge of all that is evil, without the least mixture of good, without the least alloy of ease, without the least glimpse of comfort; a total privation of all happiness, and a chaos of all misery.

3. Consider that the misery of the damned is unchangeable.

Because they carry with them out of this world the enormous guilt of mortal sin; an infinite debt of which they can never discharge the least part; a dreadful poison which has tainted and corrupted their whole souls, for which there is now no medicine; a stain which has penetrated them through and through and never can be effaced, which is proof against even the flames of hell which it continually nourishes; and the never-dying worm which eternally preys upon it. For as there is no remission of sin in hell, the whole guilt remains unchangeably in the soul with all the debt and the stain, and, consequently, calls without ceasing for the wrath of God's avenging justice, which cannot but eternally hate and punish everlasting sin. How true it is that this dreadful evil of mortal sin is the very worst of all the ingredients of eternal damnation and the source and cause of all the rest!

Conclusion. Ever detest and fly from this monster Sin; which is thus odious to thy God and pernicious to thy soul, and thou shalt have no need to apprehend eternal damnation.

JULY 29.

On the Prison of Hell.

1. Consider that hell is a prison that lies deep in the bowels of the earth, in which the damned are confined for all eternity; a prison whose gates are eternally shut and bolted upon them by the irreversible decree of Heaven, so as to prohibit for ever to them all intercourse or communication with the world above; to stop up all access to any manner of good, comfort, or ease; and to shut in with them all that can make them completely miserable. Hell is a dismal dungeon of black and fetid flames; and crammed brimful with the damned, eternally burning in those dark flames. O my soul, what a prison! What a dungeon! What dreadful locks and bars, which shut out all good, and admit nothing of God but His avenging justice!

2. Consider that this prison of the damned is in every way most hideous and loathsome and full of horror and darkness. No sun, no moon, no stars, ever appear in that gloomy region, but a dismal night reigns eternally; a night that knows no morning, nor ever expects the dawning of the day. No breath of air from above, no glimpse of light can ever penetrate that deep, bottomless pit. The very fire that rages is black and darksome; it affords no light to the wretched prisoners, except it be to represent to their eyes such odious objects as may serve to increase their misery. Who can bear the thought of such a scene of woe!

3. Consider that in this frightful dungeon the damned are bound in eternal chains, so that they can neither stir hand nor foot (Matt. xxi.), in fiery chains that wrap up their bodies, and pene-

trate them on all sides, and fix them immovably to their place of torment. That head which, by their pride and rebellion, they had lifted up against God, is now eternally nailed down at an immense distance from Him; that stiff neck which refused to submit to His sweet yoke, is now loaded with the enormous weight of the chains of hell; and all their senses and members, which they gratified in life by indulging in the false liberty of sinful pleasures, are now condemned to everlasting confinement and slavery, in links of burning flames. Oh, that sinners would be wise, and think of these things, and cease from sin!

Conclude thou, at least, my soul, to take care, and, whilst thou hast time, provide effectually for thy eternal welfare; that thou mayest never come to be cast into this dreadful and everlasting prison.

JULY 30.

On the Entertainment of Hell.

1. Consider what kind of entertainments are prepared in a miserable eternity, to succeed the banquets and revellings, and other extravagances of a voluptuous life, in which worldlings pass the short time of their mortality. How strangely shall the scene be altered, when immediately after death they shall find their souls buried in hell! What kind of feasting shall they meet with there! What ravenous hunger and thirst, without being able to obtain so much as one drop of water! "Their wine is the gall of dragons and the venom of asps, which is incurable" (Deut. xxxii. 33). "Their cups are full of the wine of the wrath of God" (Rev. xiv.). Cups of liquid fire and fetid sulphur. Their gardens of pleasure are turned into a pool of fire and brimstone. Their carnal embraces into the gnawings of infernal serpents, ever preying upon their bosoms.

2. Consider the music with which these wretches shall be for ever entertained in hell; eternal howlings and yellings; shrieks and groans; curses and blasphemies; the insulting voices of the tormentors scoffing at their sufferings; the lashes of their scourges. Unhappy sinners, how will you like such entertainments as these? Surely, if there were nothing else in hell but being condemned to everlasting night in the midst of all this horror and confusion, any reasonable man would choose the worst of temporal evils, rather than be condemned for eternity to such a horrible entertainment.

3. Consider that the sense of smell in the damned shall also have its share in this infernal feast; where it shall be for ever tormented with the loathsome exhalations of those filthy dungeons below. And what shall complete the misery of their condition, will be the abominable company they must have with them, for

endless ages, of so many hideous spirits, so many merciless devils, and what shall be worse to them than devils, the unhappy partners of their sins. What bitter hatred, what hellish rage and fury, shall their former love be now turned into? How shall they curse, how shall they tear and torment one another; being eternally chained together in those black fiery links, which by their dark passions and lusts they have in their lifetime made for themselves. O worldlings! break your bonds in sunder now whilst you have time; withdraw yourselves now from the objects of your criminal passions and disorderly affections; lest, if you carry them with you out of this world, they serve but to add so many fiery links to your everlasting chains, and to bind you down to as many devils.

Conclusion. Fly for the future from a voluptuous life and all the sinful entertainments of the children of this world; "who have their consolation here; who laugh now, but shall mourn and weep hereafter" (Luke vi.); and for thy part lament henceforward the share thou hast had with them, whilst thou hast walked with them in the broad road of a worldly life; and by these penitential tears, joined with a new life, thou shalt escape having a share with them in the entertainments of hell.

JULY 31.

On the Fire of Hell.

1. Consider that in hell every vice shall meet with its peculiar torment. There the proud shall be debased and confounded, and trodden under foot by insulting devils. The covetous, and the lovers of the mammon of this world, shall groan under the extremity of want and misery. The lascivious shall exchange their dark and filthy pleasures for fetid sulphur and black flames. There gluttons and drunkards shall be oppressed with insupportable hunger and thirst, and so of the rest. But the general punishment of the damned, and that which is most frequently inculcated in Holy Writ, is, that they shall burn in everlasting fire. Who can endure the thought of this eternal burning in that dreadful pool of fire and brimstone? Christians, what are you doing? Do you believe this eternal fire; and do you dare to sin? If you believe it not, you are no Christians, and if you believe it, and still persist in such sins as you know are the high-road to this everlasting burning, you must be worse than madmen.

2. Consider that of all bodily torments we can suffer in this world, there is none more terrible than to burn alive. But alas! there is no comparison between burning here and burning in hell. All our fires upon earth are but painted flames, compared to the

fire of hell. The fire of this world was made to serve us, and to be our comfort; that of hell to be an instrument of God's vengeance upon sinners. The fire of this world cannot subsist without being nourished by some combustible matter, which it quickly despatches and consumes; the fire of hell, kindled by the breath of an angry God, requires no other fuel than sin, and on this it feeds without ever decaying or consuming. The fire of this world can only reach the body, but the fire of hell not only pierces the body through and through in all its members, and penetrates into all the inward parts with most exquisite tortures, but also reaches the soul herself with its searching flames. Ah, who could endure such a fire as this even for one moment? How much less for an endless eternity!

3. Consider that there is no man upon earth who has not quite lost his senses, who would be willing, even for the empire of the world, to be broiled like a Laurence on a gridiron, or roasted for half an hour by a slow fire, though he was sure to come off with his life. Nay, where is the man that would venture even to hold his finger in the flame of a candle for half a quarter of an hour for any reward this world can give? Where is then the judgment of the greater part of Christians who pretend to believe in hell-fire, and yet live with so little apprehension and concern, oftentimes for years together, in the guilt of mortal sin, in danger every moment of falling into this dreadful and everlasting fire; having no more all this while than a hair's breadth, that is, the thin thread of an uncertain life, between their souls and a miserable eternity? Good God, deliver us from this wretched blindness, from this desperate folly and madness!

Conclusion. Never expose thyself to the danger of this everlasting fire by mortal sin; nor incur any such guilt, though it were even for one moment, lest in that very moment God should break the thread of thy life, and let thee drop into that fire that shall never be quenched. What mercy of thy God that it has not been thy case long ago!

AUGUST 1.

On the Pain of Loss in Hell.

1. Consider that although the fire of hell with the rest of the exterior torments, which the damned must for ever endure in that woful place, be terrible beyond all that can be expressed or conceived, yet it is in no way comparable, in the judgment of divines, to the interior pangs and agonies of the soul, caused by the pæna damni, or the eternal loss of God and of all that is good, and the perpetual sense they shall ever have of the greatness of their loss, and all its dreadful consequences. Alas! eternally

they have lost their God. They are divorced eternally from Him ; they are stripped of all His gifts and all His graces ; no light is left them in their soul ; no glimpse of hope, no sense of good, no power of love, either for God or their neighbour. Unhappy wretches that cannot love ! They are excommunicated from God ; they are sent into eternal banishment from Him, far from His glorious kingdom and the happy society of His children ; far from their true country and all its blissful joys, which were once purchased for them, by the blood of the Son of God. They are eternally separated from the ocean of all good.

2. Consider how much the damned shall realise this most dreadful of all evils, this eternal separation from God. Alas ! poor sinners, here while they lie grovelling in the mire of the earth, diverted from the thought of God by a thousand distractions, and yet continually partaking many ways of His sweetness and goodness in some or other of His creatures, they have little or no idea what it is to lose God for evermore. But the damned, by their own woful experience, shall be fully convinced, when it is too late, that of all the torments of hell none can be compared to this loss. God is infinite good in Himself ; and He is the inexhaustible source of all our good ; and of everything good in His creatures ; He is our universal good. In losing Him, then, the damned have lost an infinite good ; their first beginning and their last end, by whom and for whom they were created ; they have lost their sovereign good, their universal good, their immense eternal good, the overflowing fountain, the very ocean of all good, their true and only happiness. They have lost Him totally ; they have lost Him irrecoverably, they have lost Him eternally, they have lost Him in Himself, they have lost Him in themselves, they have lost Him in all His creatures. There is an immense gulf between Him and them, never, never to be passed.

3. Consider still further, how dreadfully the damned shall be tormented in perpetually thinking on this most rueful of all losses. Their sense of this most dismal and irreparable loss, and of all the sad consequences of it, shall continually rack their despairing souls ; they shall not be able so much as to turn away their thought one moment from it. For whichever way they shall turn, to seek any jot of ease or comfort in Him, or from Him, they shall meet with none ; all things shall seem to conspire against them ; all things shall tell them they have lost their God. They shall find themselves bound fast in eternal chains, which will keep them in a state of violence far away from Him ; and all the efforts of their vehement longing after Him shall serve only to redouble their misery. Hence there flow a thousand other evils that make their whole soul a hell to itself. Hence black despair, sadness, rage, hatred, and blasphemy.

Conclusion. Never turn away from God in this life, nor

lose Him by wilful sin ; and then thou shalt effectually prevent this last and worst of all evils, of being eternally separated from Him.

AUGUST 2.

On the Worm of Hell.

1. Consider, as we are assured by the Word of God, that the fire of hell shall never be quenched ; so are we also assured by the same unerring Word that the worm of the damned shall never die (Mark ix.). This never-dying worm of a wicked conscience, like a black poisonous serpent, shall fasten itself upon their breasts ; it shall continually gnaw them ; it shall eat its way into their hearts ; it shall perpetually prey upon their very souls. Who can conceive the greatness of this torment ! this eternal remorse ! this most bitter but fruitless repentance ! this extremity of anguish, accompanied with everlasting horror, confusion, and despair ! How hateful, how abominable shall all their former crimes now appear in the eyes of the damned ! How shall they now be convinced, when too late, of the enormity of them ! Oh, how shall they now detest them !

2. Consider that what feeds this never-dying worm is the enormous guilt of mortal sin, with which the souls of the damned are eternally stained and corrupted. This dreadful guilt is ever written on their foreheads ; it penetrates them on all sides ; renders them more ugly and filthy than the very dungeons of hell ; eternally odious in the eyes of their Creator, and most intolerable and insupportable to their own selves ; the very devils are not more hateful to them than their own souls are, as long as they see them thus strangely tainted and corrupted, and eternally possessed by this hellish monster ; or rather, by as many hellish monsters as they have committed mortal sins. Christians, see by this what the guilt of mortal sin is ! See what the dreadful consequences of it are for eternity ! And learn hence to detest it above all evils. Be assured that hell itself can produce nothing worse !

3. Consider what a racking torture it shall be to the damned for all eternity to revolve without ceasing in their memory their past folly, stupidity, and madness, in forfeiting the eternal joys of heaven which they might have obtained at so easy a rate, and selling both their God and their souls for an empty toy, for a filthy satisfaction that lasted but a moment, and left nothing behind but guilt and remorse ; or for some punctilio of honour or petty interest, by which they were robbed of all their true treasures and all their true honour, and for which they are now reduced to the extremity of all kinds of misery. What will their judgment be of this cheating world and all its short-lived fooleries and vanities, when, after millions of years in hell, looking back, and

scarcely being able to find in that immense duration the small point of their mortal life, they shall, with most bitter regret, be continually comparing time and eternity, past enjoyments and present punishments, virtue and vice, heaven and hell.

Conclusion. Keep from the guilt of wilful sin, and the worm of hell shall never come near thee: it can prey upon nothing but mortal sin.

AUGUST 3.

On a miserable Eternity.

1. Consider that what above all things makes hell intolerable is the eternity of its torments. This eternity is an infinite aggravation to all and every one of them. It is this bitter ingredient which makes every drop of that cup of the divine vengeance of which the damned are forced to drink, so insupportable. Were there so much as the least glimpse of hope that the miseries of the damned should one day have an end, though it were after millions of ages, hell would be no longer hell, because it would admit of comfort. But for these inexpressible torments to continue for ever, so long as God shall be God, without the least hope of ever seeing an end of them: this it is that is the greatest rack of the damned! O eternity, eternity! how little do worldlings apprehend thee now! How unwilling are they to believe thee (notwithstanding the express declaration of God's unerring Word), for fear thou shouldst put a restraint upon their vicious inclinations! How terrible wilt thou be to them hereafter when they shall find themselves engulphed in the bottomless abyss.

2. Consider, if one short night seem so long and tedious to a poor sick man in a burning fever; if he tosses and turns, and nowhere finds rest; if he counts every hour, and, with so much impatience, longs for the morning, which yet will bring him but little relief or comfort; what must this dreadful night of eternity be in the midst of the pains of hell? No man in his senses would purchase a kingdom at the price of lying for ten years on a soft bed without once coming off. What misery, then, must it be to be chained down to a bed of fire, and of such a fire as that of hell, with all the rest of its torments: not for ten years only, not for ten thousand times ten years; but for more than as many hundred thousand millions of ages as there are drops of water in the ocean or atoms in the air; in a word, for a never-ending eternity!

3. Consider, in order to frame a better idea of this miserable eternity; what an immense space of time would be required for one of the damned, if he were to shed but one tear in a thousand years, to shed tears enough to fill the sea. Supposing that the world has not yet lasted six thousand years; the first of all the

damned would not have shed six tears. And yet, O dreadful eternity! the time shall most certainly come when any one of these wretches might be able with truth to say, that at the rate of one tear for a thousand years, he had shed tears enough not only to make a sea, but to drown the whole world, and to fill up the vast space between heaven and earth. And then, after these millions of millions of ages, he shall be as far off from the end of his misery as he was the first day he came into that place of woe. Compute after this, if thou pleasest, as many hundred thousand millions of years as thy thoughts can reach to; suppose, if thou wilt, the whole surface of the earth to be covered with numeral figures; cast up, if thou canst, this prodigious sum of years; and then multiply it by itself; and multiply again, a second time, the product by itself; and then at the foot of this immense sum write down, Here begins eternity. O terrible eternity! Is it possible that they who believe thee, should not fear thee? Is is possible that they who fear thee, should dare to sin?

Conclusion. Ever fly with all thy power, for the time to come, all such sins as lead to this miserable eternity. And as to thy past guilt, take the best care thou art able to wash away the stains of thy soul, in the blood of the Lamb, by means of a hearty repentance and sincere confession. Penitential tears are capable now of effacing those stains, which everlasting flames shall never be able to burn away hereafter.

AUGUST 4.

On the Happiness of Heaven.

1. Consider and ponder well those words of the Apostle (1 Cor. ii. 9), that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." What then must this happiness of heaven, this eternal glory be, which so far exceeds all our thoughts and conceptions? God is infinite in all His attributes, in His majesty, power, wisdom, justice; but His goodness and mercy, His liberality, bounty, and magnificence in His gifts and rewards overflow as it were the banks, and show themselves in a most extraordinary manner above all His works (Ps. cxliv.). If His justice be so terrible, as we have seen with regard to His enemies, how much more shall His mercy, His goodness, and His bounty declare themselves in favour of His friends? What then must this blessed kingdom of heaven be, which in His infinite goodness, He has prepared for His beloved children? Which He has contrived by His infinite wisdom; and effected by His infinite power; for the manifestation of His glory, and for entertaining them all with an eternal banquet worthy of Himself?

2. Consider, that if by the cost and price of a thing we may guess its worth, we cannot make too advantageous a judgment of the happiness of heaven, purchasing which has cost the precious blood and life of the Son of God Himself; which is indeed an infinite price; and which, notwithstanding His purchase, is not to be obtained by us without much pain and labour, without many crosses and sufferings, and without giving our whole selves in exchange for it; and after all, though we were to labour ever so hard all our lifetime to acquire it, and should give ourselves and all things else for it; yet our labours, and all we can give, bear so little proportion with the greatness of this happiness, that we are said even so, to receive this water of life at free cost (Apoc. xxii. 17). Nay, though we should suffer a thousand deaths for the sake of eternal life, we are still assured (Rom. viii. 18) that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with this heavenly glory that is to come. So much does the bliss of heaven exceed all that we can say, think or conceive.

3. Consider the definition divines give of beatitude, or eternal happiness; when they term it a state made perfect, by assembling together, and comprising in itself all good things [Status omnium bonorum aggregatione perfectus], that is to say, a permanent and everlasting state, replenished with all that is good, without the least mixture of evil; a general and universal good, comprising at once and for ever, all manner of good things, filling brimful the vast capacity of the affections and desires of the soul, and eternally securing her from all fear or danger, of want or change. My soul, see thou turn all thy pursuit after this true and eternal felicity; all things else are but mere toys in comparison with this thy sovereign and universal good.

Conclude with most humble and hearty thanks to the infinite goodness of God who, before thou wast born, hath prepared such eternal happiness for thee, and provided all necessary means for thee to obtain it. But resolve at the same time to be diligent in the use of all these means of thy salvation. For He who "made thee without thy concurrence, will not save thee without thy concurrence."—St. Augustine.

AUGUST 5.

On the Good Things of our Lord, in the Land of the Living.

1. Consider that the things most apt to allure the children of this world, and to draw their affections after them, are honours, riches, and pleasures; but their error is, that they seek these things where they are not to be found, and suffer themselves to be imposed upon by false appearances. True honours, riches, and pleasures are not to be found in the broad road of the world,

nor in the ways of sin; but are to be met with together with all other good things, in the land of the living. Here all the inhabitants are advanced to the highest dignity, even to a fellowship with the living God, and a partnership with Jesus Christ in His throne. Here all are most noble and renowned, most wise and holy. Here all are of blood-royal, children and heirs of the King of kings. All are kings and queens, crowned for ever with wreaths of immortal glory, and shining far more brightly than the sun. These are honours indeed; and truly worthy of the Christian's ambition. And all these, my soul, if thou pleasest, may be thine for ever.

2. Consider the riches that flow in this happy land of promise, where the inhabitants want nothing, covet nothing, and enjoy all things. This beatitude of the Saints is called in Scripture a kingdom; and such a kingdom is it to those happy souls, as in plenty, wealth, power, greatness, and endless duration, infinitely exceeds all the kingdoms of the world. It is likened to a treasure of immense value, which all the riches of the world are not worthy to purchase. For the riches of this kingdom are of a far superior kind to earthly treasures; gold and precious stones are valued no more than dirt here where the inhabitants have the stars under their feet. The great treasure of the blessed is the eternal possession of God Himself, with all His riches. And, my soul, what more can be desired?

3. Consider that this heavenly land flows for ever with the milk and honey of pure and immortal pleasures and joys. For here, are all eternally inebriated according to the Psalmist, "with the plenty of God's house, and are made to drink of the torrent of His pleasures; for with Him is the fountain of life" (Ps. xxxv.). Yea, the great river of the water of life, clear as crystal, which proceeds from the throne of God, and of the Lamb, to water the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, having the tree of life growing upon its banks, with all the variety of its excellent fruits (Apoc. xxii.). And this is that torrent of pleasure that eternally flows into the souls of God's servants, filling brimful all their powers, senses, and faculties with inconceivable delight. Who would not gladly part with all the satisfactions the world can afford for such immortal pleasures as these!

Conclusion. Be no longer a slave to worldly toys, vain honours, false riches, and fading pleasures; but turn away, without loss of time, from this Egypt that can afford thee nothing but muddy water, incapable of quenching thy thirst, and bend thy course towards thy true country, where thou shalt meet with all thou canst desire for eternity.

AUGUST 6.

On the Transfiguration of our Lord (Matt. xvii.).

1. Consider how our Lord, taking with Him Peter, James, and John, brought them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; so that "His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow." "And there appeared to them Moses and Elias, talking with Him concerning His decease, that He should accomplish in Jerusalem" (Luke ix. 31). Now Peter being transported with the glory of this vision, cried out, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." "And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them; and lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (Matt. xviii.). This transfiguration of our Lord, full of lessons and instruction for us, is honoured by the Church in the festival of this day, with a view to raising up the thoughts and hopes of her children, in the midst of the hardships and labours of their mortal pilgrimage, to the eternal repose and glory of their heavenly country, that blessed Jerusalem which the true Israelites must never forget; though constrained as yet, by a miserable captivity, to sit down and weep upon the banks of the rivers of Babylon, and lament their distance from the house of God in Sion.

2. Consider in this mystery of the transfiguration of our Lord, how wonderfully He was pleased to confirm our faith, as well by the joint testimonies of the Law and the Prophets, represented by the glorious apparition of Moses and Elias with Christ; as by the testimony of God Himself in all the three Persons—by the voice of the Father, by the glory of the Son, and by the manifestation of the Holy Ghost in the bright cloud. See how He was pleased by the glory of this transfiguration to encourage His followers to bear with patience the afflictions, labours, crosses, and persecutions of this life, in hopes of a share in that eternal glory of which He has given us as it were a sketch in this mystery, ever remembering that of the Apostle (2 Cor. iv. 17), "that our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." But let us take with us that other lesson also, which we are taught by the voice of the heavenly Father, in the transfiguration of our Lord, that the true way to a happy eternity, and to all good, is to hear and obey the Son of God.

3. Consider how St. Peter, being out of himself with the joy of this vision, was desirous of being always in the same spot and always enjoying the like glory; and, therefore, he cried out,

"Lord, it is good for us to be here," not knowing, saith St. Luke, what he said (chap. x. 33). Because, although it was inconceivably delightful to see and enjoy the least glimpse of heavenly light and glory, yet, as this present life is not the time of enjoyment, but of labours and sufferings, and the Son of God Himself was to enter into His glory by labours and sufferings (Luke xxiv. 26); it was inordinate to desire for a continuance, that which was reserved for hereafter, and for such only as should be entitled to it. Learn hence, my soul, with regard to divine consolations and such like favours, that though thou art to receive them when given, with humility, gratitude, and love, admiring the goodness and bounty of God, who is pleased thus to look down upon thee, the most unworthy of sinners; yet art thou not to set thy heart upon them, nor to be disturbed and discouraged when they are taken away: for merit and perfection consist not in them, but in working, suffering, and loving; and for the time of this mortal life, ordinarily speaking, it is far better for thee to be with thy Lord upon Calvary than upon Mount Thabor.

Conclusion. Instead of being eager after these transitory consolations, which at best are but as drops of water that fall from the clouds of heaven, to refresh us for a moment in this dry desert through which we are travelling, aspire rather after that great overflowing river above, which gives joy without end to the City of God, and which alone is capable of quenching thy thirst and satisfying thy soul.

AUGUST 7.

On the Glory of the heavenly Jerusalem.

. Consider how glorious and beautiful those mansions are that are prepared for the eternal abode of the servants of God in the heavenly Jerusalem. "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts," cries out the royal prophet (Ps. lxxxiii.); "my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord." The beauty and glory of this city of God every way correspond with the riches, bounty, and magnificence of this Almighty Monarch, who has built it for the manifestation of his power, wisdom, and goodness, and to be the eternal habitation of His dearest friends and children. And what great things will He not do, when both His own glory and His love for us call upon Him to exert Himself? See, my soul, how noble a place He has given us here below even in this our banishment; beautified with sun, moon, and stars; furnished with an almost infinite variety of minerals, plants, flowers, trees, and living creatures, in the earth, air, and waters, all subservient to man, and all wonderfully beautiful in their kinds. If, then, He has so richly provided for us in this vale of tears, in this region of the shadow of death, what must our eternal habitation be in the land of the

living? If here He is so bountiful even to His enemies in affording them so commodious and so noble a dwelling, what may not His friends and children expect in His eternal kingdom; where alone, according to the prophet, "our Lord is magnificent" (Isa. xxxiii. 21).

2. Consider how the Scripture, to accommodate itself to our way of thinking, describes the glory and beauty of this heavenly city, by representing it under the figure of such things as we most admire here below: when it tells us that the walls of this city of God are built with precious stones, and that its streets are watered with the bright crystal streams of the river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God, and that on the banks of this river, on both sides, grows the tree of life; that there shall be no night, nor any want of sun or moon, but that God Himself shall be its everlasting light, and that the just shall shine like the sun. "How glorious are these things that are said of thee, O city of God" (Ps. lxxxvi.)! But how much more glorious are those great things that are veiled under these figures!

3. Consider that Jerusalem is interpreted the sight or vision of peace; and, therefore, this name is given to the city above, because there alone is the true seat of eternal peace. "There is the tabernacle of God with men, and He shall dwell with them; and He shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning nor crying nor sorrow shall be any more, for former things are passed away" (Apoc. xxi. 3, 4). No heat, no cold, nor rain; no storms, no diseases, no pain, no conflicts, or adversities of any kind, have access to this city, or can ever come near this blessed abode. But a most bright day, a most serene calm, an everlasting peace reigns here; "a solid peace, a peace never to be disturbed, but always secure; a peace both within and without, a peace every way firm."—Kempis.

Conclusion. Ever aspire after this blessed Jerusalem, and despise all earthly toys in comparison with this heavenly city. How good is our God, who has prepared such lovely and everlasting mansions for us! Blessed for ever by all His creatures be His infinite goodness!

AUGUST 8.

On the happy Society of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

1. Consider the multitude, beauty, and glory of the inhabitants of this blessed Jerusalem; those millions of millions of bright heavenly spirits that always surround the throne of God, as we learn from the vision of the prophet (Daniel vii.). "Thousands of thousands minister to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stand before Him; that immense number of Cherubim

and Seraphim, all on fire with divine love ; that infinite multitude of saints and martyrs, and other servants of God, of both sexes, gathered out of all nations, tribes, and tongues, and above them all, the Blessed Virgin Mother of God, the Queen of saints and angels. The number of these heavenly citizens is innumerable. They are all beautiful, and ever young ; they are all most bright and glorious. They wear the name of God on their forehead, expressed by the unalterable serenity, joy, peace, and light that shines from their countenance. The very sight of any one of them, as we learn from the experience of some of the saints and servants of God, is enough to ravish the soul into an ecstasy, and to fill it with inexpressible delight. What shall it be to see them all, and to enjoy their happy society for eternity !

2. Consider that one of the most happy things a good Christian could meet with, or desire on this side of eternity, would be to live separate from the company and conversation of the wicked and of the fools and slaves of this world, and to converse only with the wise and holy ; and be joined with them in a perfect bond of fraternal charity, friendship, and union. "Oh, how good and how pleasant it is," said the Psalmist, "for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. cxxxii.). But what company, what conversation, what friendship here upon earth, how pure soever, can bear any comparison with that of the blessed in heaven ! for there we shall meet with millions of brethren and friends, all most loving, most wise, most holy ; in a word, all full of God. Their communications one with another are most pure, their conversation most sublime and heavenly ; the praises of God and His eternal truths are their perpetual theme ; harmonious hymns of divine love are their constant entertainment.

3. Consider more in particular the inexpressible charity and love, which the blessed have one for another ; which is so great that they all have but one heart and one soul. This makes them take such inconceivable delight in each other's happiness, through the love they bear one another, as to look upon the happiness of their brethren and to rejoice in it as if it were their own. So that by means of this heavenly charity, the joy and satisfaction of every individual is multiplied to as manifold a degree as there are angels and blessed souls in heaven. How lovely is this heavenly friendship ! Let us aspire after this happy society ! Let us aim as much as human weakness will permit, at the imitation of this blessed charity, by rejoicing at every real good we discover in our neighbours, as if it were our own ; and by inviting all we can to join with us here in the love and praises of God, and in the practice of all other virtues ; that so both we and they may hereafter be happily united for eternity, in singing to our Lord the immortal songs of Sion.

Conclusion. If thou desire to be eternally happy in the society of the saints in the heavenly Sion, flee now from the midst of the

Babylon of a wicked world, and associate thyself, as much as thou canst, with the true servants of God. Nothing will be of more service to thy soul during thy mortal pilgrimage.

AUGUST 9.

On the eternal Enjoyment of God.

1. Consider, that although the kingdom of heaven abounds in all that can be imagined good and delightful, there is but one Sovereign Good, in the enjoyment of which consists the essential beatitude of heaven, and that is God Himself, whom the blessed ever see, as He is, face to face ; and see Him in the very centre of their own souls ; and by the eternal contemplation of His infinite beauty and truth, together with all His divine attributes, they are ravished and set on fire with flames of eternal love. By means of this contemplation and love they are united by a most pure union with this Sovereign and Infinite Good, and they eternally enjoy Him ; He surrounds and penetrates them on all sides with inexpressible delights ; He fills their whole souls with Himself, the overflowing source of all good ; He gives Himself to be their joy, their treasure, their never-ending bliss ; He transforms them in a manner into Himself, as when iron in the furnace is perfectly penetrated by the fire it loseth in a manner its own nature, and becomes all flame and fire. Happy creatures ! what can be wanting to complete your joy, who have within and without the immense ocean of endless felicity ?

2. Consider that what makes God Himself infinitely and eternally happy, is the knowledge, love, and enjoyment of Himself. For God Himself is His own happiness ; nothing less than His own immense divinity could ever make Him happy. See then, my soul, the infinite riches of the bounty and goodness of thy God, who giveth His servants, in reward of their loyalty, so great a good, that nothing greater can be given : even God Himself can give nothing greater ; since He giveth Himself to them, to be their possession and eternal inheritance ; and what can be greater than Himself? Shall not that suffice to make thee happy, which maketh God Himself happy ! Who then can conceive the least part of the joy, peace, and pleasure which that soul must experience, that sees herself thus full of God, and enjoying Him! How happily does she lose herself, drowned in an ocean of delights ! an immense ocean where she can neither find surface, nor bottom, nor shore, because it is on every side incomprehensible and infinite.

3. Consider in what manner the powers of these blessed souls, thus full of God, are eternally employed. Their understanding elevated by the light of glory, and in this light of God, seeing

God the light, ever contemplates with infinite satisfaction this sovereign and universal truth, and in Him sees all truth, penetrates into the secrets of God and the sublimest mysteries, and is even let into His inmost heart, to see there the immense treasure of His love for us, and the wonders He works in time and eternity, in consequence of this love. Their memory is continually occupied with the remembrance of all their God has done for them; His creating them out of pure goodness for the eternal enjoyment of Himself; His redeeming them with the blood of His divine Son; and through Him, opening to them an inexhaustible source of mercy, grace, and all good; His manifold preservations, by which He has so often delivered them, both from temporal and eternal death; and His innumerable other benefits and distinguishing favours. Their will, all set on fire with the sight of the infinite beauty and goodness of their God, loves Him without ceasing, and without measure, and perfectly consumes herself in the flames of eternal love; she lays fast hold on this her Sovereign Good, she embraces Him, eternally adheres to Him, and, by a thrice happy union, becomes in a manner the same thing with her divine Lover.

Conclusion. Employ here all the powers of thy soul upon God, by the practice of mental prayer and recollection, and accustom them now to that kind of exercise which thou hopest will be their eternal occupation. Thus mayest thou in some measure anticipate here upon earth the joys of heaven, by contemplation and love.

AUGUST 10.

On St. Laurence.

1. Consider how St. Laurence, being Archdeacon to the holy Pope Xystus, in time of the persecution of the Church under the heathen Emperor Valerian, seeing his holy Bishop led away to martyrdom, and himself left behind, addressed him in these words: "Whither art thou going, O Father, without thy son? Whither art thou hastening, O holy priest, without thy deacon? Thou wast never accustomed to offer sacrifice without me thy minister; try me then now, and make the experiment, whether thou hast chosen a fit minister, to whom thou hast committed the dispensing the blood of our Lord." To whom the holy Pope replied: "I am not going to leave thee, my son, nor to forsake thee; but only am going a little before thee: after three days thou shalt follow me. I am old, and therefore my conflict is more light and easy; but thou art young, and shalt sustain greater conflicts for the love of Christ, and shalt triumph in a more glorious manner over the tyrant." See what a spirit animated these blessed martyrs, what ardour they had to suffer for

the love of Christ; and let it be thy grief to find so very little in thyself of these holy dispositions.

2. Consider that what made St. Laurence so great a saint was his divine charity, that is to say, his ardent love for God and his neighbour. His charity for his neighbour was evidenced as well by the diligent discharge of his office in the care and support of the poor of the city, as by his distributing amongst them, in time of the persecution, treasure of the Church committed to his charge. His fervent love of God was evidenced by that invincible courage and fortitude with which he endured the worst of torments with cheerfulness and joy, because he was suffering for the sake of his Beloved. His love was truly stronger than death; and the fire with which he was broiled on the gridiron, was in no way to be compared with the flames of divine love which were enkindled in his soul, and which made him proof against all the efforts of his enemies, and victorious over the powers of earth and hell. It is divine charity that makes saints; it is an ardent love of God and our neighbour that carries souls to heaven. Let us but love as we ought, and as we are all strictly bound to love, and we shall be saints; and he who loves the most shall be the greatest saint. Teach us, dear Lord, this divine art of love; and in all things else do with us what Thou wilt.

3. Consider the lessons given us in the Gospel of this festival (John xii. 24): in which we are taught by our Lord that the grain of corn must die before it can bring forth fruit; that he who loveth his life shall lose it, and he who hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal; that the minister or servant of Christ must follow Him, and that where He is, there also His minister shall be; and that if any one shall duly minister to Christ he shall be honoured by His Father. See thou study well these gospel lessons; see thou learn to die to self-love, thy own will, thy disorderly passions and sensual inclinations, by the practice of daily self-denial and mortification, and then thou shalt bring forth much fruit. We must all be, so far at least, martyrs of Christ as to die to ourselves for the love of Him. Thus we shall be His servants and ministers indeed; we shall follow Him, and where He is, we shall also be; thus we shall come to be eternally honoured by His heavenly Father.

Conclusion. Honour this glorious martyr St. Laurence by imitation of his fervour, zeal, and constancy in the cause of God, and of his ardent love for God and his neighbour. And learn, from the consideration of the grievous torments the martyrs have endured for Christ, to suffer with patience, at least, whatever share shall be allotted to thee in the cross of Christ.

AUGUST 11.

Of the Endowments of the glorified Bodies in Heaven.

1. Consider that, as the body and soul are individual companions and partners in this life in the good or evil we do, so shall they be in the rewards or punishments of the next. Hence, besides the essential beatitude of the soul, in the eternal sight and enjoyment of God, and the happy exercise of all the powers of the soul employed eternally about Him, the body also of the servant of God shall meet with its reward in heaven: and with such, and so happy a reward as no human understanding can conceive. These bodies of ours at the resurrection shall be most wonderfully changed. "This corruptible," says the Apostle (1 Cor. xv.), "must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality." And again, "it is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it shall rise in glory; it is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power; it is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body." Spiritual, not in its substance (for it is still a body and not a spirit), but in its qualities; like the body of Christ after His resurrection, penetrating the doors that were shut and all other obstacles; clothed with perpetual health, strength, vigour, and youth; swift as thought, immortal and impassible.

2. Consider the glory and beauty of these heavenly bodies, far exceeding all earthly glory and beauty. "The just," saith our Lord, "shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. xiii. 43). The very least of God's servants in that eternal kingdom shall be far more resplendent and beautiful than anything that can be seen by mortal eye here below or represented by man's imagination. How happy shall the eyes of the blessed be that shall be eternally entertained with the sight of heavenly beauties, every one of which is ravishing to behold! Happy those eyes which shall be perpetually fed with the view of all that is delightful in the new heavens and the new earth! And what, again, is all this in comparison with the happiness of their eternal contemplation of the Great King of Glory, Jesus Christ, whom they shall always see in His beauty and His glory?

3. Consider that the other bodily senses shall have their reward in heaven, not by enjoying gross or brutal pleasures which carnal and worldly-minded men are so fond of: which defile the soul and give her no true satisfaction: but the eternal experience of pleasures of quite another nature, pure and immortal, which shall affect all the senses, and fill them with unspeakable delight from the most delicious sweets of the heavenly Paradise. As for the hearing in particular, it shall be entertained with unspeakable harmony formed by the melodious concert of the celestial choirs and the united voices of millions of millions of heavenly citizens,

sweetly singing together hymns of eternal praise and love to their glorious and ever-loving King. O my soul! the hearing of any one of these heavenly voices, could it be allowed us here, would be enough to ravish any mortal with inexpressible delight! And what must it be, eternally to hear them all?

Conclusion. Admire and adore the infinite bounty and goodness of thy God, who, not content with giving the soul so great a reward as the eternal enjoyment of the Sovereign Good, which is Himself, has been pleased to prepare such excellent gifts and endowments for the body, to make it also eternally happy. But, then, thou must remember that, if thou wouldst secure to thy body all this happiness for endless ages, thou must keep it pure and holy during this mortal life, and ever mortify its disorderly appetites and carnal inclinations.

AUGUST 12.

On a Happy Eternity.

1. Consider that what completes the happiness of the servants of God in His heavenly kingdom is the eternity and absolute security of the enjoyment of their bliss. Their joys are ever linked with God's eternity; and by the unalterable decrees of His divine love they can no more cease to be happy than He can cease to be God. The honours, riches, and pleasures of this world are short and momentary; could they continue with us even for the whole time of our life (which is seldom or never the case), they could be of no better condition than our mortal life; which is "but a vapour, which appeareth for a little while, and presently vanishes and is seen no more" (James iv. 15). And, though we would give the whole world to secure to ourselves but for one day the enjoyment of them, we should not be able to purchase any such security. How long, then, O ye children of men, will ye be in love with these empty vanities? How long will you suffer yourselves to be imposed upon with lies and deceits? Give your hearts in earnest to God: give yourselves up to divine love, and, instead of these vain worldly toys, which at best you can enjoy only for an uncertain moment, you shall secure to yourselves all good from your God for endless ages.

2. Consider, Christian soul, and look forward into this immense eternity, of incomprehensible and never-ending felicity, prepared for thee in heaven, to reward thy fidelity in the love and service of thy God, and to recompense the short labours and sufferings of thy mortal life. What a pleasure it is to lose oneself in the happy prospect of this ocean of eternity! What unspeakable joy to think of being for ever plunged into the abyss of the Divinity itself! What delight to be counting up millions of millions of

millions of ages, crowned with the honours, riches, and enjoyment of the heavenly paradise; and after all to find oneself no nearer the end of this felicity, than when one first set out. The thought of this blessed eternity inspired St. Teresa, when yet an infant, with contempt for all those things which pass away with time: and with a desire of giving up her life for the love of Christ; she often repeated with great feeling those words: "For ever, for ever, for ever!" and in the meditation on these eternal years, a bright fire of devotion was enkindled in her soul. Let the like thought inspire us with the like affections.

3. Consider that in this eternal bliss there is not only the absolute security that their joys will never have an end, but also the assurance that they shall never suffer decay or diminution, or in any way become tedious or less agreeable by the infinite length of the possession of them. For as God, whom the blessed perpetually enjoy, is every way infinite and incomprehensible; being the ocean of all good, and the inexhaustible treasure of all happiness; so the joy, pleasure, and delight of those who enjoy Him is ever fresh, and ever new, and continually fills the whole capacity, and fully satisfies the whole appetite of their souls. How "blessed then must they be that dwell in Thy house, O Lord! For ever and ever they shall praise Thee" (Ps. lxxxiii.). "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord." Yea, my soul thirsteth after this fountain of eternal life, which is with her God, and which perpetually inebriates all His heavenly guests, flowing without ceasing into their happy breasts.

Conclusion. Despise henceforward all that is earthly and transitory, and from this hour set out, and begin thy journey towards this glorious, heavenly, and eternal kingdom. There, thou shalt find all thy heart can desire—immortal honours, never-failing riches, pure and everlasting pleasures. There thou shalt meet with beauty that never fades, perpetual health, perpetual life. This alone is thy true home, thy land of the living!

AUGUST 13.

On Conformity with the Will of God.

1. Consider that conformity of our will in all things with the holy will of God is the sovereign perfection of a Christian life, inasmuch as it is the perfection of divine love and charity, which is the queen of virtues. For there can be no greater love, than to have no other will than that of our divine lover; so as ever to adore in all things, ever to embrace and love His holy will. This kind of love is perfect; it resembles the love of the angels and saints in heaven. The most acceptable offering we can make to

God, out of our poverty, is our will; whatsoever else we give Him, as long as we keep any part of our will from Him, will never content Him; He claims our whole will without reserve, when He says, "My son, give Me thy heart" (Prov. xxxiii.). Now this we give, when we conform our will in all things with His blessed will. But if we refuse to submit our will, in anything, to His holy will, we refuse Him our heart; or at the best we offer Him a divided heart, which He will never accept. My God, let my whole heart be ever Thine! Let my whole soul be ever subject to Thee. Let my will be ever a faithful servant and a true lover of Thy ever-blessed and holy will.

2. Consider the great advantages that come to our souls from perfect conformity with the will of God. It gives a certain dignity and perfection to even the meanest of our actions and to our sufferings, by making the will of God the rule of them all. It purifies our intention in all things, by continually directing the eye of the soul towards God. It brings with it uprightness and simplicity of heart, which is highly agreeable to God; it makes us, even as the Scripture says of David, "men according to God's own heart." It places the soul in the hand of God for Him to dispose of in all things, according to His holy will and pleasure. It brings along with it perfect peace and tranquillity of mind, in all events, as being directed by Him, who is infinitely good and infinitely wise; and who orders all things for the good of them who cast their whole care upon Him, and seek to have no other will but His. O blessed conformity, how rich, how sweet, and delicious to the soul are thy happy fruits! Thou makest us enjoy even a heaven upon earth.

3. Consider that conformity of the soul with the will of God rids her of all evils, and puts her in possession of all virtues. It is the sovereign means of bringing all our passions into order and subjection, and of mortifying all our irregular inclinations. For that which makes them disorderly and irregular is their opposition to, or their resistance of, the will of God; whereas this blessed conformity obliges them to stoop and submit to His sacred will. It humbles the soul under the mighty hand of God; it teaches her to be meek under injuries, affronts, and provocations, considering them all as coming from the just appointment of heaven; it makes her willing to take up her cross and bear it till death, with perfect patience and resignation; in a word, it teaches her to be obedient unto death. Grant us, dear Lord, this blessed conformity.

Conclusion. Set great esteem upon this conformity with the will of God; it is the greatest treasure thou canst enjoy in this mortal pilgrimage. But then it is not to be obtained without thy being in earnest in seeking it, fervent in praying for it, and ready to part with thy own will and humour to purchase it.

AUGUST 14.

On the Motives that oblige us to perpetual Conformity with the Will of God.

1. Consider that all kinds of motives concur in recommending to a Christian this best of all devotions, which has for its object the holy will of God. It is our greatest honour and glory to follow God, to submit to Him, to be servants of His divine will, of His divine love, to be so closely united to Him as to have no will but His. It is our greatest interest to conform ourselves in all things with His blessed will; it brings with it all kind of good to our souls, both for time and eternity; for by giving up our will without reserve to God, we engage Him to give Himself without reserve to us. It is the source of the greatest, and, indeed, the only true and solid pleasures, to embrace the will of God in all things; forasmuch as it unites the soul with the Fountain of all sweetness, which is God. The will of God is always right, always wise, always good, always beautiful. The will of God is God Himself. What motives then have we not to conform ourselves continually with this ever-right, wise, good, beautiful will of our loving God! How wicked it is to rebel against this sovereign will! How mad it is for us to pretend to withdraw ourselves from the will of the Almighty!

2. Consider that the only business for which we come into this world is to do the holy will of God. The Son of God Himself had no other business during His mortal life than to do the will of His Father. "I came down from heaven," says He (John vi. 38), "not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." And (Ps. xxxix.), "In the head of the book it is written of Me, that I should do Thy will; O my God, I have desired it—in the midst of My heart." In this same book of life is written also of the children of God, that they should do the will of their heavenly Father; this is the test by which we are to be examined; all they who, with Jesus Christ, desire in the midst of their hearts, and, like Him, embrace and love the holy will of God, and conform themselves to it, shall be acknowledged for true children of God, and brethren of Jesus Christ; but as many as shall revolt and fall off from their allegiance to the blessed will of God, shall have their name blotted out of the book of life. See then, my soul, that the true way to heaven is to conform thyself with the divine will.

3. Consider that by all manner of titles, God claims of us conformity with His heavenly will. He claims it as our Creator; because He made us to serve Him, and gave us our will, with the rest of the powers of the soul to be employed in the service of His holy will. With what face then can we refuse Him the sacrifice

of that will which He made for Himself? Or how can we pretend that His divine will should stoop to our silly will, and not rather give up at all times our own will, by perfect conformity to the will of our Creator? The Son of God claims our will as our Redeemer, by the title of purchase; because He ransomed our souls, enslaved to Satan and sin, and bought them for Himself and His Father, at a great price, even with His own most precious blood. So that our will ought always to be at His disposal, as His property; and ought ever to conform itself with His blessed will. The Holy Ghost claims our will by the title of sanctification; because our whole soul was at our baptism dedicated, sanctified, and consecrated by the Spirit of God, to be the eternal temple of God. Therefore our will, which is the principal power of the soul, and which commands the rest, is strictly bound to be obedient to the will of Him who has chosen and sanctified it for Himself.

Conclusion. Give always to God what, upon so many titles, belongs wholly to Him, and never more be a rebel to the will of God; or give the preference to thy own will, or that of any other creature, before the will of God.

AUGUST 15.

On the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin.

1. Consider, in the festival of this day, and contemplate in spirit the glorious entry of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, into the everlasting kingdom of her Son. See, my soul, with what joy of the whole court of heaven; with what triumph, with what heavenly hymns she was escorted thither, by legions of angels; see how all the citizens of heaven went forth to meet her; with what affectionate embraces she was welcomed by her divine Son, and presented by Him to His eternal Father. See how she was placed above all the angels and saints; above the Cherubim and Seraphim on a most glorious throne, the highest in heaven next to that of her Son; and crowned by Him with a diadem of such supereminent brightness and glory, as is not to be expressed nor conceived. Rejoice, O my soul, in this glorious Assumption of the Mother of our Lord, who, as He has been pleased to make us His brethren, has been pleased to make her also our mother. What a happiness for us to have such a mother (who has so great interest with the King of heaven, and who takes our welfare so much to heart), so near the throne of all mercy and grace! O blessed Virgin, graciously look down upon us, in this our banishment, and always show thyself a Mother to us!

2. Consider what brought the ever-blessed Virgin to this supereminent glory, which we honour in the festival of her Assump-

tion? 1. It was her most profound humility: she was exalted above all because she was the most humble of all. For he that humbleth himself the most upon earth, shall be the most exalted in heaven. 2. It was her perfect purity of soul and body, mind and heart, from all defilement of sin. 3. It was principally her supereminent love of God; for the degree of the enjoyment of God in His eternal glory is ever proportioned to the degree of our love of God in this mortal life. If, then, we hope one day to follow this blessed Virgin to heaven, and to have a share in the glory of her Assumption, we must endeavour to imitate her humility, purity, and love of God. No soul can ascend to heaven by any other way than that of humility, purity, and the love of God.

3. Consider that this imitation of the virtues of the Blessed Virgin, is an excellent way of honouring her, and of showing our real esteem, love, and devotion to her. For how can we better testify our affection and veneration for the saints of God, than by honouring and loving in them, that which made them saints; and that which God Himself honours and loves in them, that is, their virtues? Or, how can we better express our esteem and love for their virtues, than by studying to imitate them? This kind of devotion is most pleasing to the saints, to the Queen of saints, and to the God of the saints; it is most honourable to them and most profitable to ourselves. This will bring us effectually to the eternal society of the saints; which without this no other devotion can secure to us.

Conclusion. So rejoice in the exaltation of our blessed Lady on this day of her glory, as to take a generous resolution of walking in her footsteps, by a diligent imitation of her life; but more especially in following the great example of her humility, purity, and love of God. This generous resolution of thine will be so agreeable to her, as to add a new satisfaction and joy to the immense felicity she possessed before.

AUGUST 16.

On the Gospel read on the Festival of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, Luke x., *&c.*

1. Consider how our Lord, going into a certain town, a certain woman, named Martha, received Him into her house; and she had a sister called Mary, who sat also at the Lord's feet, and heard His word. How happy were these holy sisters, who had it thus in their power to receive the Lord of glory into their house; to entertain Him there, to hear His word, to converse familiarly with Him, and to minister to Him! How happy should we have been, if we had lived at that time, and could have been favoured in the like

manner! But stay, my soul, and see, if this same Lord does not offer thee the like favours at present; and if it be not entirely thy own fault that thou art not a great saint in consequence of them. For does He not still abide amongst us in the blessed sacrament? Does He not there come in person into our house? Does He not bring all His treasures of Divine grace with Him, to enrich our souls? May we not, by a spiritual communion, invite Him to us whenever we please? May we not by a spirit of recollection and mental prayer entertain Him and converse with Him as long as we please? Does He not often visit us with His graces? Does He not often stand at the door of the heart and knock? Have we not His heavenly word with us? May we not minister to Him when we please, and serve Him in the person of the poor, which service He declares He looks upon as done to Himself? If so, what reason have we to regret not having lived at the time of our Saviour, seeing He is always living with us?

2. Consider how differently these two holy sisters were employed; the one being busy about much serving, and full of care in providing for the entertainment of our Lord; the other sitting still at His feet and quietly attending to His divine word. And yet they were both employed about Him; they both dedicated themselves to His love and service. In this, they represent two different kinds of lives of the servants of God, the active and the contemplative; or, if you please, two different functions of a Christian life; the one consisting in action, the other in contemplation; the one in the variety of good works done with a good intention, for the service of Christ; the other in a more quiet retirement and recollection, and a closer attention to God by mental prayer. Both of these are good, both highly commendable; because both of them tend to the love and service of God; but the latter is preferred by the judgment of truth itself; because it makes that, its occupation here, which is to be its eternal employment hereafter. Mary has chosen the better part which shall not be taken from her. Learn thou, my soul, of Martha, ever to direct thy common actions with all the functions and labours of thy calling, by a pure intention to the service of Christ; learn to sanctify them by calling in Mary, that is recollection and prayer, to thy assistance. But learn also of Mary to retire as often as thou canst from the noise and hurry of the world, to the feet of Christ; learn of her as often as thou hast thy choice, to choose that better part of contemplation and love, which is to be thy eternal occupation.

3. Consider that this Gospel is applied by the Church to the Blessed Virgin and her Assumption; because she was the happy woman who received, in an extraordinary manner, Christ into her house; she perfectly fulfilled in her life both the functions of Martha and of Mary; of Martha in the services she rendered to our Lord in His humanity, for all the thirty years He was under

her roof; and of Mary, by the perpetual contemplation and love of His Divinity; so that even in the midst of the duties of the active life, the eye of her heart was always upon God, she ever attended to the one thing necessary, she ever made choice of the better part, and on this day of her exaltation she was put in full possession of it for eternity; according to that, Mary has chosen the better part which shall not be taken from her.

Conclude, my soul, to follow her great example in choosing always the better part, that thou mayest partake in her everlasting happiness.

AUGUST 17.

On Resignation to the Will of God, in all our Sufferings.

1. Consider that it is a most certain truth that nothing happens in the world, excepting sin, which does not come directly from the hand of God, and which is not the effect of His holy will. So that our sufferings, of what kind soever they may be, are all ordained by Him, and all pass through His hands before they can reach us; which is so true that even those sufferings which seem to be brought upon us immediately by the wickedness of men, are in effect all sent by the ordinance of God; who, though He abhors whatsoever there is of malice and sin in the will, or design of men or devils, whom He suffers to afflict or persecute us; yet, most certainly, He not only permits, but absolutely wills the afflictions, trials, or punishments we suffer on these occasions. And it is His intention and our duty, that in all these sufferings we should not look so much at the visible hand of the unjust creature, as at the invisible hand of the just God; and that in all these cases we should in such manner detest the malice or wickedness of the men who afflict us, as ever to submit to, and even embrace the chastisements of the Lord, as of a tender Father, who sometimes makes use of a rod for the correction of His children. How resigned should we be, if we always remembered these truths!

2. Consider that all our sufferings not only come to us from the hand of God, but are designed by Him for our greater good. He is the best of fathers; His fatherly providence and tender love for us exceed all we can express or conceive; the holy Scriptures are full of repeated declarations of this truth; it cannot be called in question without contradicting both the divine word and the perpetual experience of the servants of God. So that we ought to be always assured, considering God's infinite wisdom, goodness, and love for us, that all He sends is for the best, and is indeed the best for us. See, my soul, that thou always remember this truth in all thy pains, sicknesses, crosses, and afflictions; and in general in all things that happen to thee, contrary to thy desire or expectation. On all these occa-

sions thou must consider Jesus Christ Himself as offering thee this cup or this cross, desiring thee to receive it for His sake ; and assuring thee that it shall be the means of bringing thee to heaven. How true it is, as we shall clearly see one day in the light of God, that the very things we are apt to consider as evils, are indeed great and solid goods ; and that through them millions of souls shall be brought to eternal happiness, who, without them, might have been eternally miserable. Let us learn then to resign ourselves without reserve to all the appointments of a good and loving Providence.

3. Consider the degrees by which we ought to endeavour to advance towards the perfection of this great virtue of resignation in all things to the divine will. The first and lowest is to support at least with patience the evils that befall us ; and this because they come from the hand of God ; and humbly to submit to them as the just punishment of our sins, saying with the prophet, "I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him" (Mic. vii. 9) ; and with the Psalmist under afflictions, "I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth, because it is Thy doing" (Ps. xxxviii. 10). The second degree, which is more perfect than the first, is when we not only endeavour to bear our sufferings with patience so as not to murmur or repine, or otherwise offend God, but also are ready and willing to suffer, because such is the will of God ; so that the consideration of His holy will and pleasure makes the cross (which, according to nature, we dread and abhor) agreeable to us, inasmuch as the will of God is thereby accomplished in us. The third and most perfect degree of resignation, and which carries with it the perfection of divine love and charity, is when we not only readily and willingly accept the cross from the hand of God, but even rejoice in suffering for the love of Him ; and take an unspeakable content in crosses, adversities, humiliation, in poverty, in being condemned by the world, so that we would not even wish to be without them, out of pure love of Him who chose a suffering life for the love of us, and because the accomplishment of His will is the object of our desire, our love, and our joy. What a heaven should we find upon earth if we could arrive at this third degree of divine resignation ! For what can disturb the soul that always rejoices at the accomplishment of the will of God, and finds her pleasure and content in suffering ?

Conclusion. Make it thy study to ascend by these steps of resignation to the holy will of God in all things, from virtue to virtue, till thou arrive at the top of the ladder, where thou shalt find thy God, and be for ever inseparably united to Him.

AUGUST 18.

On Self-Denial.

1. Consider that the capital enemy of the love of God and of all our good, especially of resignation and conformity to the will of God, is the vice of self-love, or a disorderly inclination to gratify and please ourselves; which is the unhappy consequence of the corruption of man by sin, and the fruitful parent of all our evils. All our vices and passions spring from this poisonous root; the seven capital sins are but so many branches of this inordinate inclination to ourselves: take away self-love and you shall shut up all the avenues of hell, and establish everywhere the reign of the love of God and a most blessed heaven upon earth. Hence the virtue of self-denial, the business of which is to suppress and root out this dreadful evil of self-love, is one of the most necessary of Christian virtues, and must ever go hand in hand with conformity to the will of God, which can never take root in our souls so long as we are unhappily attached to our own will, and fond of gratifying our own inclinations. Hence the very first condition the Son of God requires of all who would be His disciples is to deny themselves (Matt. xvi. 24). Self-denial is the great lesson He came down from heaven to teach. Happy we, if, by His grace, we can effectually learn it in practice!

2. Consider that this virtue of self-denial is usually called mortification, from a word signifying slaying or putting to death; inasmuch as, by continually fighting against ourselves and our corrupt inclinations and passions, we put to death, as it were, and crucify the old man of corruption (Rom. vi. 6) with his vices and sins (according to that of the Apostle, Gal. v. 24, that they that are of Christ have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences), and so die to ourselves; that we may put on the new man Jesus Christ, and live in such manner to Him, as to be able to say with the same Apostle, "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in Me" (Gal. ii. 20). See, my soul, what this virtue of mortification means, which is much talked of but little understood and less practised; and yet no virtue is more necessary for our true welfare. We may even apply to it what St. Paul says of charity (1 Cor. xiii.), that, "if we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have the gift of prophecy, and all knowledge and all faith, so that we could remove mountains, and are not mortified, we are nothing:" and that whatsoever other qualifications we may have, or whatsoever good we may do, so long as our passions and corrupt inclinations remain unmortified, we shall be nothing in the eyes of God.

3. Consider how mortification of our passions and inordinate inclinations is everywhere strongly inculcated in the Word of

God. We are even assured that we must hate ourselves in this life, if we hope to be either true disciples of Christ here or to be eternally happy with Him hereafter (Luke xiv. 26; John xii. 25); that if we live according to the flesh we shall die, but if by the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the flesh we shall live (Rom. viii. 13); and that they who are in the flesh, that is, they who are unmortified, cannot please God (ver. 5), besides many other texts, which abundantly demonstrate that no one can be a good Christian without waging a perpetual war against his sensual inclinations and diligently taking up the cross of daily mortification. Hence the flesh, with its passions and lusts, is always reckoned by divines amongst the three great enemies of the soul, and is indeed by far the most dangerous; because the world and the devil, with all their suggestions, would not easily draw us into sin and hell if our own flesh, that is, our corrupt inclinations and passions, did not pave the way and furnish them with the arms with which they fight against us. The world and the devil besiege us from without, but could never force their way into the soul, if our evil inclinations did not hold correspondence with them and open the gates to let them in.

Conclusion. If thou desire to overcome the world and the devil, make it thy business to subdue the flesh and bring it under subjection by wholesome self-denial and mortification. Without this restraint upon thy passions and inclinations there will be no soundness in thy soul, thy head will be sick and thy heart sad (Isa. i. 3, 6).

AUGUST 19.

On Mortification of the Interior.

1. Consider that, as the business of mortification in general is to reform the whole man and retrench all that is evil and vicious in us, or that might disqualify us for union with God, by divine love, for which He made us and gave us immortal souls, by tying down our hearts and minds to created objects; so that kind of mortification in particular ought to be most diligently exercised by a Christian that refines, polishes, and reforms our interior, in which we carry the image of God, and in which He delights to dwell, provided He finds it in proper condition to receive and entertain Him, that is, provided He finds it mortified. My soul, what ought we not to do to qualify ourselves for so great a happiness as this, of having God with us and of being interiorly united to Him! In order to this thou must observe well the irregularities which thy inward powers and faculties are liable to, that thou mayest retrench them by mortification and so purify thy interior. Believe me, mortification of the interior is an exercise far from

difficult, but withal far more necessary for thee, and far more acceptable to God than any corporal austerities whatsoever.

2. Consider what those irregularities are, of thy inward powers and faculties, that stand in need of being retrenched by mortification. Alas! if thou wilt but give thyself leisure to study well what passes in thy interior and to know thyself, thou shalt find thy understanding liable to pride, self-conceit, self-sufficiency, presumption, empty curiosity, and many errors of dangerous consequence in practice, such errors as oppose the maxims of the Gospel, and represent things in false lights, and weigh them in false weights, so as to influence the poor soul to prefer the temporal before the eternal. Thou shalt find thy judgment liable to be rash and precipitate, and clouded with the exhalations that arise from thy passions and self-love. Thou shalt find thy memory liable to vain wanderings and forgetful of God. Thou shalt find thy imagination dissipated in pursuit of worldly toys, vain schemes, or sinful objects, and thy affections, appetites, and desires strangely bent upon evil and averse to everything that is painful or laborious. See, my soul, what work is here cut out for thee, and how much thou hast to mortify in thy interior to qualify it for union with God!

3. Consider, that amongst the powers of the soul, that which most of all stands in need of being mortified is the will. The will is, or should be, mistress of the rest, and is obliged to keep them in order, which she can never do if she herself be disorderly. Hence the Holy Ghost admonishes us by the mouth of the wise man (Ecclus. xviii. 30, 31): "Go not after thy own lusts, but turn away from thy own will; if thou give to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies." Hence also He tells us (Prov. xxx. 15): "The child that is left to his own will, bringeth his mother to shame." Because this will of ours, when indulged, is capable of hurrying us away to all that is evil. And therefore we are called upon in the Gospel to hate our own soul (animam suam), that is, our own will in this world, if we hope to be happy in the next. For the fire of hell, says St. Bernard, can burn nothing but our own will.

Conclusion. Apply thyself seriously to this most necessary mortification of thy interior, and more especially of thy will and desires. This mortification is to be exercised, first, by denying to thy own will whatever it craves contrary to the will of God; secondly, by accustoming thyself in things indifferent often to contradict thy own will, and never to do anything merely to gratify thy inclinations; thirdly, by curbing, even in things that appear good, that eagerness and hurry which nature, passion, and self-love are apt to prompt thee to, and setting before thy eyes and quietly following on these occasions the will of God, and not thy own.

AUGUST 20.

On Mortification of the Passions.

1. Consider the necessity we lie under, ever since the corruption of our nature by sin, of keeping our passions in order by continual mortification of them. Before man was corrupted by original sin, his soul was regular and orderly, and his passions were under proper command. But as soon as the superior part of the soul had withdrawn herself from allegiance to God, the inferior part began to rebel against the superior, and all its appetites and passions were let loose to run into all manner of disorders, because the bridle of original justice was now flung off, with which they were before kept in and restrained. Hence arises an indispensable necessity of ever mortifying our passions, if we would secure our souls. For as our nature is now corrupted, our love and our hatred, our desires and our fears, our joy, our grief, and our anger, all share in this corruption, and are all apt to be disorderly if not curbed and corrected by daily mortification.

2. Consider that this most necessary branch of mortification, which relates to our passions, consists in duly regulating their motions, by directing them to their proper objects and restraining their excesses, so that they may all be brought under subjection to reason and religion, and made even serviceable to the true welfare of our souls. Thus we are to regulate our love, our desires, and our joy by turning them away from all disorderly affection to perishable creatures, to the living God, from running after vanity and fooleries to the pursuit of virtue and truth, and by keeping them always within their proper bounds, that they may not disturb the peace of the soul or distract its application to God. In like manner we must mortify our fear, our anger, and all our other passions by watching over their motions and restraining their disorders and excesses. Happy are they who, by daily practice of mortification, are arrived at that command of their passions, which is the blessed parent of true peace and a certain image of heaven upon earth! Happy they who turn their fear and all their love to God and to what God would have them fear and love, who hate nothing but the offence of God, desire nothing but the will of God, rejoice in nothing but God, grieve at nothing but what is contrary to His honour and the good of souls, and are angry at nothing but sin!

3. Consider that as love is the strongest of all the passions, and that which principally influences the rest; so regulating it, and mortifying its disorders ought to be the great object of the Christian's attention. My love is my weight, says St. Augustin, thither am I carried wheresoever I am carried. Now, love is

regular and orderly when we love all things according to the rule of the will of God, when we love our friends in God, and our enemies for God's sake. But, on the other hand, whatsoever love, whether of any person, or creature, or anything else, offers to captivate our affection, or divide, or take off our heart from God, or carry us out of the bounds of moderation, reason, or religion, is disorderly, and must be restrained, corrected, and mortified. Such love as this strikes at the very root of the welfare and salvation of the soul, by violating the first and chiefest of all God's commandments, which is to love the Lord our God with all our heart.

Conclusion. Watch over thy passions that thou mayest keep them all in subjection, but principally take care to restrain thy love and thy desires from all unlawful, dangerous, or vain objects, and from excess or immoderation, in being too strongly bent, or too eagerly carried, even to lawful ones; for whatsoever the object be, it is a criminal love to affect anything more than God.

AUGUST 21.

On Mortification of the predominant Passion.

1. Consider that the passions of love and desire, when they are unmortified, branch out into all manner of vices and vicious inclinations, commonly ranged under seven heads, which are usually called the seven capital sins, though St. John brings them into a narrower compass when he reduces them all into these three, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John ii. 16). Now amongst these vicious inclinations which wage war against the soul, there is usually some one or other that is stronger and more violent than the rest, or that occasions more or greater sins; and this is named by divines the predominant passion, the mortification of which is one of the chief duties of a spiritual life. For this predominant passion being, as it were, the captain and commander of the rest, when it is overthrown the rest will more easily be subdued, as when their champion Golia was slain the Philistines were immediately put to flight.

2. Consider that as this predominant passion, this reigning love, this strongest desire or affection, whatever the object of it may be, has already unhappily gained the heart, it is but too apt to impose upon the poor soul with specious pretexts, in order to keep its hold and maintain its ground, against the remonstrances of conscience and all the calls and graces of Heaven. This is the Agag, which the deluded soul, by a false compassion, would willingly spare, though with the risk of being cast off by God, as Saul was, for so doing (1 Sam. xv.). Christians, deceive not yourselves; this predominant passion, this favourite affection, which

has taken possession of your heart, is the capital enemy of God and your souls; it must be slain, it must be sacrificed to the living God. Beware of the traitor you carry about with you; suffer Him not to impose upon you; it is very easy, if you are not wilfully blind, to discover what he would be at; because upon the least examination of your heart, you will find him busy in undermining the reign of the love of God, thrusting himself upon His throne, and setting up an idol in His temple, by claiming the chief place in your heart to the prejudice of divine love.

3. Consider what you must do in order to get rid of this worst of all your enemies. You must make yourself thoroughly acquainted with the depth of his malice and his stratagems, that you may not be surprised or imposed upon by him; you must observe his motions, to resist them at the very beginning; you must study all the secret springs by which he acts upon the heart, and sets the other passions at work to fulfil his irregular inclinations. Christians, it is of infinite importance in this spiritual warfare to know the true state of your interior, and to watch all the motions and secret ambushes of your enemies! You must single out this enemy in such manner as not to allow any one of your passions or vices to remain unresisted in your soul, yet you are in a more especial manner to turn all your forces against this predominant passion, by directing your daily and most fervent prayers, your confessions and communions, your particular examination every night, and the rest of your spiritual exercises, towards totally subduing this evil and acquiring the contrary virtue.

Conclusion. If you hope to succeed in the great work of the mortification of your passions, begin by declaring eternal war against their chief, and never cease to attack him on all occasions till you have brought him down. All the rest will yield when he is subdued, and you shall begin to relish the sweets of peace and true liberty, which you shall never enjoy till you have broken the chains with which he enslaves you.

AUGUST 22.

On Mortification of the Sensual Appetite.

1. Consider that our sensual appetite, that is, the strong inclination we have to gratify our senses and indulge them in their pleasures, is one of the most dangerous enemies the soul has, and stands most in need of being restrained and corrected by mortification. The flesh, with its senses, was designed to be the servant of the soul, and to be subservient to its true welfare and happiness. But if the sensual appetite be not kept under by mortifica-

tion, the servant will quickly become mistress, the poor soul will be made her slave, and will be dragged along by her irregular inclinations into all kinds of evil. Our sensuality therefore must be mortified; we must absolutely deny ourselves all unlawful, sensual, and carnal pleasures; we must fly them more than death; we must retrench all excess and immoderation in the use even of lawful pleasures and diversions; we must never suffer ourselves to affect them, much less to have a passion for them; we must accustom ourselves to curb and thwart the inclinations of our senses, in things lawful or indifferent, that so we may acquire a greater facility in overcoming our sensual appetite, when it inclines to things unlawful, and may at the same time punish ourselves for having formerly indulged in them. In fine, we must never do anything merely for our pleasure.

2. Consider the opposition there is between a sensual life, or a life of pleasure, and a Christian life, which is agreeable to the maxims of the Gospel, the practice of Christ and of His saints, who have taken up their Cross to follow Him, and have always borne in their bodies the mortification of Jesus, and have been, as it were, crucified with Him. This opposition is so great that the Apostle cannot speak without weeping of those half Christians, who give themselves up to their pleasures, of whom he says (Philip. iii. 18, 19), "that they are enemies of the Cross of Christ; that their end is destruction; their God is their belly; they glory in their shame, and mind only earthly things." Christ did not study His own pleasure. "He did not please Himself" (Rom. xv. 3). His whole life was a Cross, which He voluntarily chose for the glory of His Father and for the love of us. The Apostle "chastised his body, and brought it into subjection," by voluntary mortification (1 Cor. ix. 17); all the saints have walked in the same footsteps, they have all crucified their own flesh (Gal. v. 24). "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and none but they that use violence upon themselves bear it away" (Matt. xi. 12). And shall Christians think that a sensual life will ever bring them thither? No; true "wisdom is not found in the land of them that live in delights" (Job xxviii. 13). And we are not to imagine we may give ourselves up to our pleasures here, and yet promise ourselves "the good things of the Lord in the land of the living" hereafter (Luke xvii. 25).

3. Consider that there is no one but may, and ought to, practise mortification of the flesh and of its sensual appetites, and that, too, by restraining it often from things otherwise lawful. The guilty must do it to punish themselves for their past sins; the innocent to keep themselves from falling into sin, which will be the unavoidable consequence of not mortifying and keeping under so dangerous an enemy. None must excuse themselves on account of their want of strength or health; it is easy for a Christian of goodwill to contrive and put in execution a variety

of self-denials that neither require bodily strength nor prejudice the health. If we are not able to wear the hair shirt or use the discipline, if we cannot fast or lie upon the hard floor, we may, at least, retrench many superfluities and affected niceties in our eating, drinking, and clothing. We may shorten the time we give to unnecessary lying in bed; we may, upon many occasions, withdraw ourselves from things we are inclined to, and which, perhaps, are less wholesome for us, and choose such things as are less agreeable to our inclinations; in fine, we may daily and hourly mortify in many things, our eyes, our ears, and our tongue.

Conclusion. Make it thy daily business to mortify thy sensual appetite, lest otherwise flesh and blood prevail on thy soul, and she fall a prey to her mortal enemies.

AUGUST 23.

On Mortification of Curiosity.

1. Consider that besides the evil of sensuality, which must be mortified in order to subdue the concupiscence of the flesh, there is another dangerous evil that must also be mortified, in order to subdue the concupiscence of the eyes, and that is, the vice of curiosity, which St. Augustin (Confession L. x. c. 35) supposes to be understood by this name. A dangerous evil indeed and the mother of many evils, which makes men busy themselves about things either hurtful or at least nothing to the purpose, whilst they neglect things profitable and necessary, yea, the only thing necessary. Alas! how many things are there that men take much pains to inquire into which are dangerous to their souls! How many which are absolutely useless and unprofitable and which answer no end, either of the glory of God or of their own or neighbour's good? And how much loss is here of their precious time! What dissipation of thought! What distractions in prayer? What forgetfulness of God and eternity? What enslaving of the soul to meet toys and vanities? And what account shall they be able to give at the last day of a life spent so unprofitably, so unworthily of the great end for which they came hither, and so perversely, because so contrary to the holy will and law of their Maker?

2. Consider the particulars in which we must mortify the lust of the eyes, if we hope to keep the soul pure and prevent death from coming in at those windows. We must turn our eyes away from vanity, and much more from such objects as allure the soul to impure love; the unguarded glance of an eye has a thousand and a thousand times been the death of the soul. Unhappy they who are ever indulging their curiosity in looking after dangerous

objects! And much more unhappy they who by their levity and indecent dress draw the eyes and hearts of others to lust! For the same reason we must mortify our curiosity with relation to public shows and comedies, as being full of danger and allurement to lust; as also to reading such books as, being either lewd, profane, or irreligious, tend to debauch the soul and draw her into sin.

3. Consider the necessity of mortifying the ears, since these also are an avenue through which, if not well guarded, death oftentimes makes its way into the soul. This branch of curiosity must be corrected, first, by stopping the ears to all loose conversation, which is apt to convey a mortal poison into the soul; secondly, by restraining them from hearkening to scandal and detraction, with danger of either taking pleasure in it or countenancing and encouraging so great an evil; thirdly, by keeping a guard upon them, to prevent their taking in a still worse infection by hearkening to irreligious and impious discourses, which strike at the Deity and His revealed truths, or tend to discourage virtue or promote vice. In a word, the Christian who would save his soul must ever have a guard on himself, in all company and conversation, lest the curiosity of his ears induce him to hearken with pleasure to such speeches or words as may let the corruption of sin into his heart.

Conclusion. Ever watch and pray against the evil of curiosity, which has so many ways of poisoning the soul. But if thou wouldst indulge the desire of knowledge (which is natural to man), let it be by inquiring into useful truths, and such as may serve to bring thee to the sovereign truth. "But woe to them that inquire of men after many curious things, and at the same time are but little curious of knowing the way to serve God!" (Kempis.)

AUGUST 24.

On the Gospel for St. Bartholomew (*Luke* vi. 12, &c.)

1. Consider how our Lord, designing to make choice of His twelve Apostles, by way of preparation for this great work, went up into a mountain and there passed the whole night in the prayer of God, that is, the most earnest and fervent prayer. Learn hence, in all thou takest in hand to begin with prayer, in order to draw down the blessing of Heaven upon thy undertakings; learn also of thy Saviour to be fervent and earnest in thy prayers; learn to retire with Him as often as thou canst, for thy private devotion, from the noise and distraction of the world. Recollection, solitude, and the silence of the night are great helps to devotion.

What oughtest thou not to do to secure the salvation of thy

soul, when the Son of God passed whole nights in prayer for the love of thee? He stood not in need of prayer for Himself, but has given us an example, to teach us how much we ought to take to heart upon all occasions this exercise of fervent prayer.

2. Consider the fruit of this night's prayer in the great things our Lord performed the next morning, which we may reduce under three heads: 1. His choice of the twelve Apostles; 2. His divine sermon on the mount; 3. the miracles He wrought, when, as the Gospel informs us, "a very great multitude of people came to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases, and virtue went out from Him and healed them all" (vers. 17–19.) Contemplate, my soul, all these wonders of divine grace, wrought in consequence of the prayer of that night. Behold a company of poor, weak, illiterate fishermen, advanced on a sudden to be the pillars and founders of the Church of God and prime ministers of His kingdom upon earth. Bow thyself down and embrace the heavenly law, published on this occasion by thy Redeemer, in that admirable sermon, in which with most amiable simplicity, joined with wonderful authority, He has laid the foundation of Christian morality; and learn to approach in spirit to His feet with His disciples, to receive of His doctrine (Deut. xxii. 3) and to be healed of all thy diseases. Ever remember that the true way of all good and the source of all light, grace, and benediction, is to go up with Him to the mountain and converse with God by recollection and prayer.

3. Consider what we read in the Gospel, "that all the multitude sought to touch our Lord, for virtue went out from Him and healed all" (ver. 19). If virtue went out from our Lord to heal the corporal diseases of all them that touched Him during His mortal life, can we suppose He has either less power or goodness to heal the spiritual maladies of such as properly apply to Him, now that He has entered into His glory, after shedding His precious blood for us? No, certainly; but, as "all power is given Him in heaven and earth," so virtue never ceases to go out from Him, in favour of all who spiritually approach Him and seek to keep Him company in their interior; and how much more in favour of such as verily and indeed touch Him, and receive Him within their house, by means of Holy Communion! Let us always endeavour to keep close to Him, and His virtue will always be with us.

Conclusion. Go up with Christ often into the mountain by retirement and prayer. In all dangers let this be thy refuge. Run thither to be delivered from all thy evils. Here thou shalt meet thy sovereign Good.

AUGUST 25.

On Humility.

1. Consider that the most necessary of all mortifications is that which teaches us to mortify our pride by the virtue of humility. Humility is the favourite virtue of heaven; all other virtues are nothing without it, they even degenerate into vices when tainted with pride. Humility makes us become as little ones, low, mean, and despicable in our own eyes, and willing to be such in the eyes of others. Humility makes us sensible of our own demerit, misery, and sinfulness, teaches us to divest ourselves of all conceit of our own performances or abilities, and to ascribe all good to God alone. Humility sits down in the lowest place, makes us sincerely prefer others before ourselves, and pretend to no esteem, praise, honour, or glory, as due to us, or to any excellence of our own; but to be fully and feelingly convinced, not only that we are good for nothing of ourselves, and deserve nothing but punishment, but also that it is owing to God's pure goodness that we are suffered to live upon earth; and that any one shows us the least regard, or does us the least service; and that all God's creatures have not a general license to rise up against us, and punish us for our offences against their Creator; in fine, that we are not long since in hell.

2. Consider that what makes this virtue of humility so acceptable to God is because God is Truth, and cannot help loving the truth. Now pride is made up of errors and lies, in taking ourselves to be something, in pretending to what is not our due, or ascribing to ourselves what belongs not to us; or in fine, in being puffed up with the gifts of God, as if they were our own property or of our own growth. And what is all this but lies? Sacrilegious lies, that try to rob God of His glory, to claim for ourselves what belongs to Him, and, Satan-like, to pretend to set ourselves on His throne! But Humility goes always hand in hand with Truth; and ever grounds herself upon the truth, by giving to God what belongs to God, and to man what belongs to man; by acknowledging, with all simplicity, conviction, and affection, God to be all, and man to be nothing; and by ever ascribing to God whatsoever there is of good in one's self or in anything created, and reserving to one's self nothing but one's own defects. This is true humility, this is the truth that shall stand for ever. This was found, in greatest perfection, in the most eminent saints upon earth; this shall reign with them in heaven for all eternity, where God shall be all in all.

3. Consider that humility is not only a virtue absolutely necessary for arriving at Christian perfection, but that there is no salvation for us without it. There is no going to heaven without

God's grace ; now "God resists the proud, and gives His grace to the humble" (James iv. 6). And our Lord expressly assures us that "except we become as little children (by humility), we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3). No, my soul, let us not deceive ourselves ; there is no room in heaven for pride. Satan and his companions were cast down from thence by their pride ; and their places are not to be filled up but by the humble. Only they who humble themselves upon earth shall be exalted in heaven. The Most High and the Most Holy, who inhabiteth eternity, will only "dwell with a contrite and humble spirit" (Isa. lvii. 15), and will have respect to none, to bring them to His heavenly kingdom, but such as in their mortal life, by the virtue of humility, are poor and little, and of contrite spirit, and tremble at His words" (Isa. lxvi. 2).

Conclusion. If thou wouldst have part with God in His eternal kingdom, be ever little and humble here upon earth. The more thou stoopest down and castest thyself under the feet of all, by humility, the more God will lift thee up and exalt thee ; for He alone is truly great, and ever looks down with a favourable eye upon them that are low and humble, to exalt them here by His grace and hereafter in His glory. But as for such as lift up their heads by pride, and take themselves to be great and high, He keeps them at a distance and regards them with horror ; "for the proud and arrogant are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xv. 5).

AUGUST 26.

On the School of Humility.

1. Consider that the school in which we are to learn true humility, is the serious consideration and true knowledge of God and of ourselves. To know God and to know ourselves is the true science of the saints. These two branches of Christian knowledge usually go hand in hand, and mutually promote and assist one another. The more we know God, and the infinity of His perfections, the more sensible we are of our own demerit and of our total dependence on Him ; and the more we know ourselves and our miseries and sins, the more clearly we perceive that God alone is good, and that He is infinitely good in bearing with us. Here we learn true humility, because here we learn to annihilate ourselves in the sight of that infinite Majesty, in whose presence the universe dwindles away to nothing, and both heaven and earth disappear. Here we learn to ascribe all good to this Sovereign Good, and nothing to ourselves. Here we learn to descend even beneath ourselves, by the consideration of our sins and of the hell we have deserved by them. Here, in fine, we learn to have so great a sense of our manifold miseries and sins,

as to keep our eyes open only to our own defects, and shut to those of others; and by that means we learn to despise no one but ourselves, and to prefer all others before ourselves.

2. Consider, my soul, and in order to acquire a more perfect knowledge of thyself, that so thou mayest always be little and humble, take a more particular review of thyself, and seriously reflect on what thou art, both as a mortal and as a sinner; that thy extraction is from nothing, that thou wast conceived and born in sin; that thou art liable to innumerable miseries, both of soul and body; that thy powers and faculties are strangely impaired and disordered by sin; that thou art ever prone to evil, and hard to be brought to good; that thy passions are headstrong and rebellious; thy affections bent upon vain toys and lying fooleries; and thy thoughts, words, and actions full of corruption. In the meanwhile thy time is hastening on without intermission to its last period; death is following close at thy heels, and shall quickly overtake thee, and send away this body of thine, which thou art so fond of, to be the food of worms, and thy poor soul to another world, to be tried at an unerring tribunal, under a dreadful uncertainty whether she shall not be an eternal prey to merciless devils. And is it possible that we should be sensible of all these humbling truths, and should seriously reflect on them, and yet be proud!

3. Consider, that amongst these humbling considerations, that which ought most effectually to abate, or rather quite beat down our pride, is the remembrance of our sins and what we have deserved for them. Wretched creature that I am, I have been guilty of mortal sin, of high treason against my God, and that perhaps a thousand times, and consequently I have deserved a thousand hells; and what can I have to be proud of? What a wretched figure did my soul then make in the sight of God and His angels! How odious, how filthy, how abominable was she all that time! And is she so still? She stood then condemned to hell; and has that sentence ever been reversed? What pretension can I have to honour, esteem, or regard from anyone? What title to favour from God or man? What just reason to complain, if all God's creatures should combine against me, to revenge upon me the wrong done to their Creator; and should tread me under their feet, to punish the pride by which I lifted up my head against the Almighty? What would all this be in comparison with my deserts? How then, shall I dare to entertain any proud thought, either of conceit of myself, or of seeking to be esteemed by others, or of resenting affront, contradiction, or contempt from any man, since I have no title to anything but hell! And what room can there be for glorifying there?

Conclusion. Daily frequent this school of humility by studying well to know thy God and to know thyself; this kind of science is infinitely more to thy purpose than all other arts and

sciences put together; all which indeed would serve only to puff thee up, and betray thee to thy mortal enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, if not accompanied with the knowledge of God and of thyself.

AUGUST 27.

On the Master of whom we are to learn Humility.

1. Consider that in order to teach us humility, God has sent down a Master from heaven, even His own eternal Son, who is no less God than His Father. Of what importance, then, must it be for us to study well this great lesson, which the Son of God Himself has come down from heaven to teach! Who could have thought that we, who are so little, so wretched and contemptible, so near the brink of nothing, and by our sins beneath nothing, should be so strangely conceited and so monstrously corrupted by pride and self-love, that nothing less should suffice to teach us to be humble, than the example of the Son of God Himself coming down from heaven and becoming a little one amongst us; "yea as a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people" (Ps. xxi.). And yet even so, how few are there of us who are content to be little and contemptible with Him! How few are willing to be scholars of this heavenly Master, or to submit to the least humiliation for love of Him!

2. Consider the sweet invitation of our Lord (Matt. xi. 28, 29), calling us to "come to Him, and take His yoke upon us, and to learn of Him, because He is meek and humble of heart, and promising us refreshment and rest for our souls," on our compliance with this invitation. What encouragements are here to us to spare no pains in learning in this heavenly school of humility taught by the Son of God, and to make us love the study of truth! A most excellent Master! The Son of God Himself, the Sovereign Truth! Blessed school-fellows, all the saints of God and favourites of heaven! A most excellent science, which brings the soul through the gate of her own unworthiness to the contemplation of her God, the pure Truth! Excellent fruits, peace of the soul, refreshment and rest from her labours and burdens, victory over all her passions, and a happy acquisition of all other virtues! Let us frequent this heavenly school of Christ.

3. Consider the great example of humility given us by the Son of God, "who being in the form of God (true God no less than His Father) thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet debased Himself, taking the form of a servant, the servile nature of man, and humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the most disgraceful death of the Cross" (Phil. ii. 6–8). His whole life was full of lessons of humility. He chose to be born in a stable, to be circumcised as a sinner, to flee into Egypt as

if He were unable to resist a petty mortal, to be brought up in poverty and labour, to work at a laborious mechanic trade, to be obedient to His creatures, to be baptized amongst sinners, to suffer Himself to be tempted by the devil ; to make choice of the poorer and meaner sort of men for His companions and disciples, to make Himself as their servant even to washing their feet, to fly from honours and applause, to conceal His glory, to enjoin secrecy with regard to His wonderful works, and to embrace on all occasions, both in life and death, whatsoever was most humbling and most despicable in the eyes of men. O divine Jesus, teach us to follow Thy blessed example ! Teach us to be meek and humble of heart like Thee, that so we may be Thy disciples indeed !

Conclusion. Set always before your eyes the life and doctrine of Jesus Christ, in order to conform yourself to His divine maxims and examples, and to learn of Him to be truly humble. No other Master than He can effectually teach you this divine lesson.

AUGUST 28.

On the Fruits of Humility.

1. Consider that humility is the ground on which other virtues must be built ; they have all of them a necessary dependence on this foundation, and are all of them more or less perfect in proportion to the degree in which we possess humility. Faith itself, which is commonly looked upon as the foundation of all our good, absolutely depends upon humility, even that humility which obliges the soul to adore what she cannot understand, to submit to the most humbling truths, and to "cast down every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every understanding to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 4, 5). All heresies proceed from pride, self-conceit, and refusing to give up or submit one's own judgment to divine authority ; hence nothing but humility can secure the soul from this danger and keep her firm to her faith. In like manner divine hope depends upon humility, which alone can keep the soul in the golden mean between the two extremes of diffidence and presumption ; whilst it teaches her to have no opinion or confidence in herself, nor any way to build on her own weak foundation, but wholly upon the rock which can never fail us, of the power, goodness, and mercy of God. For the less we trust in ourselves, the more we trust in God. And thus we shall find that they who are most humble, have also the strongest faith and hope, and are usually instruments in the hand of God of His greatest works.

2. Consider that divine charity, the queen of all virtues, in

both the love of God and the love of our neighbour, has also a close connection with humility. and can never maintain her ground in our soul without being supported by humility. Because humility furnishes the soul with the most pressing motives to assist her to love God, humility sets His goodness in its proper light, makes the soul wonder that He being what He is should have any regard for her, or even bear with such a sinful wretch as she is; humility teaches her that she is nothing, and that God is All, infinitely good in Himself, and infinitely good to her. Indeed, this infinite goodness of God, which is the proper object of divine love, is never rightly comprehended but by the humble. And as to that branch of charity that relates to our neighbour, it is very evident that it can never be maintained but by humility; for all the vices that oppose and destroy fraternal charity, such as hatred, envy, contention, rash judgment, detraction, or anger, all spring from pride and are not to be vanquished but by true humility, which teaches us to prefer others before ourselves and to be angry with no one but ourselves.

3. Consider that prayer, which is the general means of all our good, must also be presented before the throne of God and recommended by humility, else it will never be effectual with God; but when it is accompanied with humility, it can do all things. "The prayer of him that humbleth himself," saith the wise man (Ecclus. xxxv. 21), "shall pierce the clouds . . . and he will not depart till the Most High behold him," viz., with a favourable eye, to grant his petition. For as the Psalmist assures us, God hath regard to the prayer of the humble and despiseth not their petitions. And from the beginning the proud have never been acceptable to Him, but the prayer of the humble and of the meek has always pleased Him. Even the prayer of the greatest sinners, when presented with a contrite and humble heart, is not despised by Him (Ps. i.), as evidently appears in the case of the publican (Luke xviii.), who by this short prayer, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner," accompanied with profound humility and perfect contrition, was immediately justified. Blessed humility, what canst thou not effect! Dear Lord, teach us to be humble.

Conclusion. If thou desire to raise in thy soul the fabric of virtue, lay in the first place the foundation of humility; and the higher thou hopest to erect this fabric, the lower must thou sink the foundation by profound humility. Virtue without this foundation will prove no better than a house built upon sand, which at the first storm or inundation will fall to ruin.

AUGUST 29.

On the other Fruits of Humility.

1. Consider that the moral virtues, as well as the theological, have all of them a necessary dependence on humility. That prudence will come to nothing which is self-conceited and builds upon the devices of man, rather than upon the light and grace of God, procured by humble prayer. Justice will be deficient in many ways if corrupted by pride, which always makes men partial to, and so full of themselves, as to be ever ready to judge, censure, despise, and condemn their neighbours: and unwilling to regulate their thoughts, words, and deeds by that golden rule of doing in all things as they would be done by. That fortitude will fail, when it comes to the trial, which for want of humility is built upon sand and not upon the rock. And that temperance can never be perfect which withholds only the sensual appetite from excess, and does not withal restrain the irregularities of the other passions, and qualify the fumes of pride, that they may not turn the head with self-conceit. Now this is the proper business of humility, and can never be effected without it.

2. Consider that not only the four cardinal virtues, but all the others, depend in like manner on the foundation of humility. Meekness, which restrains anger, and bears with evenness of soul all affronts and provocations, goes hand in hand with humility, and is recommended to us jointly with it, by the great example of our Lord. "Learn of Me," said He, "for I am meek and humble of heart." Poverty of spirit (which disengages the soul from love of the world) is either humility itself or its offspring. Purity and chastity can never be maintained but by humility; the most shameful falls into the worst impurities are often the punishment of pride (Rom. i. 24). Modesty, when it regulates only the exterior, and is not accompanied with humility of heart, is but hypocritical and Pharisaical, and deserves not the name of virtue. Obedience is the favourite daughter of humility, as disobedience is the first-born of pride. Patience under crosses and sufferings springs also from humility, which teaches us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, in all His appointments, ever to kiss the rod and to be convinced that what we suffer is nothing to what we deserve. In a word, perpetual conformity with the blessed will of God in all things, is the inseparable companion of true humility, and brings with it to the soul the happy fruits of tranquillity and peace, which are the joint offspring of these two virtues.

3. Consider that humility is also the parent of the two necessary virtues of penitence and self-denial. Because, the more humble we are, the more we know ourselves, and the greater

sense we have of our sins; and consequently the greater horror and hatred for them, and the greater desire of making satisfaction for them by a penitential life. In like manner the more humble we are, the more we are sensible of our own weakness, and of the dangers that surround us on all sides, from the devil, the world, and most of all from our own passions, and that unhappy self-love which is the root of all evil; and thus the humble knowledge of ourselves makes us keep a greater guard upon ourselves, and a closer rein upon our passions and disorderly inclinations, in order to restrain their irregularities and bring them all under perfect subjection. Now this is self-denial; the business of which is to subdue self-love, and force it to submit to the love of God. Thus all virtues depend upon humility. How blessed it is to be little in our own eyes! There is no other way to any degree of true greatness.

Conclusion. If thou aspire to perfection, enter upon the path of humility; no other way can bring thee thither: if thou aimest at arriving thither by any other road, thou wilt be sure to fall down some dreadful precipice.

AUGUST 30.

On the Degrees of Humility.

1. Consider that true humility does not consist in speaking ill of ourselves, by saying we are great sinners, or the like; nor yet in wearing plain apparel, or employing ourselves in mean offices; not in looking down upon the ground, and the like. We may do all this, and yet be far from being humble: because all this may be done out of pride, either to acquire the esteem of others by outward show of humility, or to please and applaud ourselves with the conceit of being humble. True humility consists not in words, nor in outside show; but in the inward sentiments of the heart. Humility, says St. Bernard, is a virtue by which a man, out of a most true knowledge of himself, becomes mean and contemptible in his own eyes: so that for a man to be truly humble, is to have a low opinion of himself, through the deep sense he has of his unworthiness, and of his sins; and therefore to despise himself, and be willing to be despised by all the world. See, my soul, if these be thy dispositions: if not, thou art not truly humble.

2. Consider that the first degree of humility is that which is expressed in the definition given by St. Bernard, that we should have that knowledge of ourselves, and of our miseries and sins; such a conviction of our having nothing to be proud of, and very many things that make us wretchedly mean and contemptible; as sincerely to despise ourselves: seeing there is nothing in us of

good that is our own ; and that whatsoever is in us of our own proper growth, or of our own stock, is good for nothing. What room then can there be in us for self-conceit, or self-esteem? How many and how pressing inducements have we, to oblige us to think meanly of and to despise ourselves? And yet how much does pride prevail, in spite of all these humiliations, which we carry about with us? Let this misery of ours be at least a motive to despise ourselves the more !

3. Consider that the second degree of humility advances us still further, and makes us not only despise ourselves, but willing, and even desirous, to be despised by others ; and that others should have the same mean opinion of us that we pretend to have of ourselves. And, indeed, since in other things we are willing to have others of the same opinion as ourselves, did we sincerely despise ourselves, we should certainly be glad that others should have the same way of thinking as we have, and should in like manner despise us. Alas ! how far am I from these dispositions ! The third and most sublime degree of humility is that of the Saints, who in the midst of the greatest favours and highest elevations, and all the supernatural gifts of divine grace, are so established in God's truth, as to ascribe nothing to themselves, but all to God : and the more they are exalted by Him, are so much the more mean in their own eyes. Happy they who in all things know how to distinguish what belongs to God from that which belongs to themselves, and reserve to themselves only that which is their own, and give all the rest to God !

Conclusion. Aim at ascending from step to step, by help of the knowledge of thyself ; and rest not till thou arrivest at the perfection of humility. She will bring to thee all good things along with her, and conduct thee safe to the kingdom of God.

AUGUST 31.

On the Practice of Humility.

1. Consider that in order to acquire this most necessary virtue, we must have a great esteem for it ; we must greatly desire it, and seek after it ; we must earnestly pray for it every day of our lives and neglect no opportunity of learning it, or improving ourselves in it, by the practice of it. Now as the humiliations which come to us either from the hand of God or man, give us the best opportunity of practising humility, we must learn to welcome and embrace them in such manner, as to take occasion from them to humble ourselves daily both to God and man. For as we never shall learn patience without sufferings and crosses ; so we shall never learn humility without humiliations. But as in

the sufferings and crosses which come to us through the hands of wicked men, we must ever distinguish that which is the work and will of God from that which is the malice of men, so that we embrace the one, whilst we detest the other; so likewise in our humiliations, if they be attended with the evil of sin, either our own, or others, we must humble ourselves under them, so as to embrace the abjection or humiliation, whilst we abhor the sin.

2. Consider, that in learning humility by practice, it will be proper to proceed gradually, by setting ourselves certain lessons, beginning with those that are easy, and when they are learnt, proceeding to such as are more difficult. Thus, for instance, let us begin by learning, 1. Not to seek, in anything we do, the praise, esteem, or applause of men; nor to say any word, tending directly or indirectly to our own praise or honour; but rather to mortify that inclination we have to be ever speaking of ourselves, and of our own performances. 2. Never to excuse or palliate our faults or defects, nor to fling the blame upon others. 3. Not to take pleasure in hearing ourselves praised, nor in being honoured or applauded by men: nor to be displeased at others being extolled, or preferred before us. 4. Carefully to shun all occasions of honour and praise so far as we can, without being wanting to the duties of our calling. See, my soul, how much work is cut out for thee, and yet these are but the beginnings of the virtue of humility.

3. Consider that to proceed in the practice of humility, we must not be content with not seeking, nor taking complacency in the praise, honour, and esteem of others; but rather we must shun and fly from it. Moreover we must put away all self-esteem, and learn to despise ourselves from our hearts; and not leave off till, according to the gospel lesson, we can with simplicity and sincerity sit down in the lowest place; giving the preference in our own esteem to others before ourselves, and thinking ourselves the worst of all. Then, as to the sentiments of others in our regard, and their treatment of us, we are to proceed in the study and practice of humility by these three steps. 1. We must learn to suffer with meekness and patience, being despised, reproached, or affronted by others. 2. We must learn to receive this kind of treatment with willingness and readiness of mind, and be pleased at being slighted and contemned. 3. We must learn to embrace all these humiliations with joy; and not to stop, till with the Apostle, we not only are dead to the world, and to all it can say, either for or against us; but are even glad that we should be crucified to the world, and the world to us.

Conclusion. Continue, by diligent application, both the study and practice of these great lessons, till thou become perfect in them all: and go through the whole course of this heavenly science of the Saints.

SEPTEMBER 1.

On the Eight Beatitudes (Matt. v.).

1. Consider how the Son of God, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father, being come down from heaven to be our Father, our light, and our guide, in order to reclaim us from our errors, to dispel our darkness, to redress all our evils, and to conduct us into the way of truth and everlasting happiness, opened His heavenly school for these purposes, by His divine sermon upon the mount; in the beginning of which He has laid down in a few words the principal maxims of true wisdom, and all the fundamentals of Christian morality, comprised in what we commonly call the eight beatitudes. Christians, we all desire to be happy for ever: and behold here the wisdom of God, which can neither deceive, nor be deceived; declares to us in clear and distinct terms, what it is that will make us happy here, and conduct us to a happiness that shall never end. Let us embrace these blessed lessons! Who would not study them well, since learning them is to make us wise indeed; and to bring us infallibly to the very source of wisdom and happiness; even to eternal union with God Himself? O heavenly Master, who would not frequent thy divine school, since in the very first entrance into it thou directest us into a plain and easy way to eternal bliss?

2. Consider that the ancient philosophers, with all their pretensions to wisdom, were strangely in the dark with regard to man's true happiness, his last end, and his sovereign good. As they knew not the end, so were they also strangers to the true means that bring us to it. They never imagined that to be poor in spirit, to be meek, to mourn, to suffer persecution, was the way to happiness; much less did they suspect that such alone were really happy. This was a doctrine never heard of in their schools. This lesson was to be taught by the Son of God. This truth He brought with Him from heaven, and delivered to His disciples in His first divine sermon. Let us embrace, with all affection, these divine truths, taught by so great a Master; let us be practically convinced of them, and conform ourselves to them in the whole conduct of our lives.

3. Consider how miserable are the children of Babylon, that is, all deluded worldlings, who under the name of Christians, whilst they profess themselves followers and disciples of this divine Master, take no notice of the lessons which He came from heaven to teach, but live on in affected ignorance of them. Such consider those to be miserable whom He pronounces blessed, and those alone to be happy who wallow in riches and sensual pleasures whom He declares to be miserable, and against whom He pronounces His woe. And do such people as these, indeed, believe the

Gospel? whilst they pretend to seek for happiness in the very way, which (if the Gospel be true) must needs betray them into many errors, labours, and sorrows here, and shortly conduct them into endless misery. Let us at least be more wise! Let us open our eyes to this great light which is come down from heaven to shine upon them that before sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. Let us believe and adhere to this great Teacher, who has the words of eternal life. Let us follow Him, and we shall not fail, under His conduct, to find the true way to solid happiness and eternal life.

Conclusion. Be ever thankful to the Son of God for these gospel truths, which He brought us in order to loose our souls from the earth, and carry us up to heaven. If we desire to ascend to this region of pure and immortal joy, it must be with the wings of the virtues that are recommended to us in these eight beatitudes.

SEPTEMBER 2.

On Poverty of Spirit.

1. Consider that the first of the eight beatitudes is expressed in these words: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven (Matt. v. 2). This beatitude or happiness, which brings with it a title to the kingdom of heaven, belongs in the first place to them that are poor by condition, and in effect (Luke vi. 20.), provided they be contented with their poverty, and cordially embrace it as the companion and favourite of Christ and His Saints. The Son of God came down from heaven to seek poverty upon earth: He was born in poverty; He lived in poverty; and He died in poverty; and shall we disdain, shall we fly and abhor what the Wisdom of God made choice of for Him and His? especially since He has declared that to be poor here is the true way to be rich hereafter, and that the men of riches, who have their consolation here, after they have slept out their short sleep, shall find their hands empty; whilst the poor, after their short sufferings, shall be admitted to the immense treasures of a happy eternity.

2. Consider that this beatitude belongs in the second place to them that are poor in affection; that is, who set not their heart on their worldly wealth, but are in readiness of mind to part with their riches whenever God shall call for all or any part of them; and, in effect, willingly resign them when He is pleased to take them away: as also to all such as are poor by choice, for the love of Christ; who, when they understand such to be the will of God, actually relinquish all they have to follow Him. In fine, to all such as have their affections disengaged from perishable things; from worldly honours, possessions, and pleasures; from all that

is earthly and temporal; in a word, from all that is not God; for such as these, and only such, are in a proper disposition to fly up to the kingdom of heaven. There is no flying thither so long as we are tied down by affection to anything upon earth. Who will give me the wings of the dove, that is, of simplicity and purity in all my intentions and affections, that being let loose from this wretched earth, by true poverty of spirit, I may fly up freely to my God, and eternally repose in Him!

3. Consider that this beatitude belongs in a particular manner to the humble; for such are truly poor in spirit who are not puffed up with windy pride, nor with conceit of any ability of their own; like him to whom it is said (Apoc. iii. 17), "Thou sayest, I am rich and made wealthy, and I have need of nothing, and thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:" nor are they high-spirited or high-minded, which is being rich in spirit; but are poor, mean, little in their own eyes, and therefore exalted by God: who to such as these gives His grace in this world, and His heavenly kingdom in the next. Teach us, dear Lord, to be thus poor in spirit; teach us to be little and humble.

Conclusion. Begin thy study of true wisdom, by applying thyself to learn well this first lesson of poverty of spirit: especially since thy great Master expects, and requires of all His disciples that they should enter His school with a disengagement of their heart and affection at least, from everything else; that they should leave all to follow Him.

SEPTEMBER 3.

On Meekness.

1. Consider that after poverty of spirit, meekness is recommended to us as the true road to everlasting happiness: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land." The virtues of poverty of spirit and meekness are nearly allied, they go hand in hand. Our Lord joins them together, and expects we should learn them both from Him (Matt. xi.) when He calls upon us all "to take His yoke upon us, and to learn of Him, because He is meek and humble of heart." But what will He give us, if we learn to imitate His meekness? He assures us, that we shall find in the exercise of this virtue, refreshment, rest, and peace for our souls here, and shall inherit the land of the living hereafter. Happy portion of meek souls, even the possession of the Lord of Life Himself, in the land of the living! Christians, who would not embrace this virtue, which brings with it a calm serenity and tranquillity of soul even during our pilgrimage through the region

of the dying, and secures to us, in our true country, the eternal repose and life of the Saints!

2. Consider what this meekness is which is entitled to this beatitude. Meekness is a virtue which restrains all anger and passion; suppresses the swellings of the heart, under real or imaginary provocations or injuries; stills the tumult of the soul on all these occasions; keeps in all heat or violence of words; and allows no other than that truly Christian revenge of overcoming evil with good. Such was the practice of the Lamb of God, both in life and death; of whom it was written (Isa. xlii. and Matt. xii.), "He shall not contend nor cry out, neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets: the bruised reed He shall not break, and smoking flax He shall not extinguish. He shall not be sad nor troublesome." And (1 Pet. ii. 23), "When He was reviled, He did not revile; when He suffered He threatened not; but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly." Now, this meekness, this sweet and gentle behaviour, this evenness of soul, joined with courtesy in words and affability to the little and poor, as much as to the great and rich, joined with true humility of heart, makes up the proper and distinctive livery of the true servants and followers of Jesus Christ; which if we do not endeavour to put on, He will not own us for His. It was this made up the amiable character of the primitive Christians. The sweet odour of these truly Christian virtues attracted thousands in those days to the faith of Jesus Christ; and will be found at all times more effectual in the conversion of souls, than the strongest arguments or even miracles, if not recommended by meekness and humility. Let us embrace these lovely virtues! "My son" (says the Spirit of God), "do thy works in meekness, and thou shalt be beloved above the glory of men" (Eccles. iii. 19).

3. Consider what we must do, that we may effectually learn to be meek, and may obtain a complete victory over anger and passion, and all that train of evils which are the usual attendants or consequences of anger and passion. 1. We must watch. 2. We must pray. 3. We must fight. We must watch over our own heart; that we may not be surprised by sudden motions of anger, and hurried away before we are aware; we must forecast the occasions, in which we may meet with temptations or provocations, that we may be prepared for them and armed against them. We must on all occasions pray, with all the fervour of our souls, for divine assistance, against so dangerous an evil as passion, as being a capital enemy of charity, the queen of virtues; we must often lament our misery in this kind, at the feet of the Lamb of God, and sue for redress by the intercession of the blessed Virgin, and of all the Saints; we must for this purpose frequent the Sacraments, the sources of heavenly grace. We must fight, by diligently suppressing the first motions of wrath: we must be

convinced that no man upon earth, nor all the men upon earth, no nor all the devils in hell, with all their malice, can do us half so much harm as we do ourselves by venting our passion, and seeking revenge; and therefore we must resolve to fight till death, with the best arms we are able, against this wicked passion, as an enemy which is continually seeking to betray our souls to Satan.

Conclusion. Spare no pains that thou mayest effectually learn of Jesus Christ to be meek and humble of heart; there is no other way to peace here, nor to heaven hereafter.

SEPTEMBER. 4.

On Mourning.

1. Consider those words of our Lord, in the third beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Reflect how widely distant are all the maxims and notions of worldlings with relation to a happy life, from the doctrine of this beatitude, which is the doctrine of Truth. The children of this world imagine that mirth, and pastimes, and worldly pleasures, are the chief ingredients of a happy life; and that such as laugh are much more happy than such as weep and mourn. But they are certainly deceived: for He who cannot err has pronounced a woe, implying the worst of miseries against them that laugh now, "for they shall mourn" (saith He) "and weep" (Luke vi. 25), whilst on the other hand He has declared them happy who now weep and mourn. And the Holy Spirit, long before, has told us by the wisest of men (Eccles. ii. 2), "Laughter I have counted error, and to mirth I have said, Why art thou vainly deceived?" And again (Eccles. vii. 5), "The heart of the wise is where there is mourning, and the heart of fools where there is mirth." Let us mourn now with the wise and with the Saints, that we may rejoice with them for ever.

2. Consider what kind of mourning is recommended in this beatitude. Not worldly sadness, of which it is written (Eccles. xxx. 25), "Sadness hath killed many, and there is no profit in it:" and (2 Cor. vii. 10), "The sorrow of the world worketh death." Not sullen melancholy, or any such mourning as is turbulent or accompanied with impatient wishes for death, or anxious solicitudes, or despondency, but calm and peaceful mourning of compunction for our sins, daily bewailing them in the sight of God, and doing penance for them: of compassion for our neighbours, lamenting their miseries, and the havoc that sin is continually making amongst souls; of condolence with Jesus Christ for the outrages He daily receives from impenitent sinners, who are continually crucifying Him by their wicked

lives: in fine, of devotion, in considering our long and wretched banishment, our great distance from our true country in the midst of wars and dangers, and no security but in continual watching, praying, and labouring to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; of our absence from God, our Sovereign Good who alone can satisfy our souls; and therefore daily mourning for the length of our sojourn in this Babylon, with longing desires after our heavenly Zion. Happy they who are always mourning in this manner!

3. Consider what the reward is that is promised to them that mourn: "They shall be comforted," saith the Lord. Yea, they shall be comforted, even in this life, with the sweet visitations and grace of the Spirit of God, the true comforter of souls; with the satisfaction and peace of a good conscience; and with the experience of the inconceivable sweetness that is found in the love of God, one hour of which is capable of affording more solid pleasure and delight to the soul than many years of worldly enjoyment. And in the life to come, they shall be comforted without measure or end: "they shall be inebriated with the plenty of God's house, and shall drink of the torrent of His pleasure," at the very head "of the fountain of life" (Ps. xxxv. 9, 10), the streams of which afford immortal joys to the whole city of God above. When shall we be so happy as to drink at this fountain!

Conclusion. Make it thy choice to mourn now, that thou mayest rejoice for ever. Remember that "they who sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Ps. cxxv. 5). On the other hand, the children of the Babylon of this world, who seek delight and comfort here, must expect hereafter to fall under that sentence of Babylon. "As much as she hath glorified herself, and hath been in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her."

SEPTEMBER 5.

On hungering and thirsting after Justice.

1. Consider the words of the fourth beatitude: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill." Happy hunger and thirst which bring the soul to the possession of true justice, virtue, and perfection, and to a blessed union with the very fountain of justice, which is God Himself! Reflect, my soul, how the desire to be good is indeed the beginning of all good: the desire of wisdom, according to the Scripture, is the beginning of wisdom: the desire of the love of God, is the beginning of the love of God: and so of all other virtues. But then this desire must not be a half desire, like that of the sluggard, of whom the wise man says, that "he willeth, and he willeth not" (Prov. xiii. 4), but a full and earnest desire. And when this

desire is strong and persevering, when it grows to vehement hunger and thirst after divine love, and true justice and Christian perfection, it sets the soul seeking diligently, praying heartily, knocking earnestly at the gate of divine mercy, and employing all possible means, to procure the satisfying this hunger and thirst: and thus it easily overcomes all obstacles; and never leaves off its pursuit till it has obtained what it so earnestly seeks and desires. Happy souls, that hunger and thirst in this manner!

2. Consider, more in particular, what it is we are to hunger and thirst after, in order to be entitled to this beatitude. The justice of God in ourselves; the justice of God in our neighbours; the justice of God in Himself. We hunger and thirst after the justice of God in ourselves, when we earnestly seek and desire that we may, by the grace of God, fulfil all justice; that we may acquit ourselves of every branch of our duty; and that the love of God may take full possession of our souls, both for time and eternity. We hunger and thirst after the justice of God in our neighbours, when we earnestly desire, and, as much as lies in us, seek and procure that others may know, love, and serve God, and be eternally His. We hunger and thirst after the justice of God, in Himself, when we are in love with His infinite goodness, as it is in itself; with the beauty of His divine attributes, with His greater glory in all things; and with the perfect accomplishment of His holy will. Such was the hunger and thirst after justice that our Lord Himself had upon earth, who says of Himself (John iv. 34), "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." My soul, have we any share in this blessed hunger and thirst? Or do we not rather loathe this heavenly food, and hunger after the flesh-pots of Egypt, and thirst for muddy waters, drawn out of broken cisterns which can never satisfy us?

3. Consider the reward promised to them that hunger and thirst after justice: "they shall have their fill," saith the Lord: their fill here of divine grace, true devotion, heavenly charity, all Christian virtues, of a store of good works and merit, of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Ghost; in a word, of that justice which they hunger and thirst after: and hereafter they shall be still more happily filled with the beatific vision and the eternal enjoyment of God Himself, the only true and Sovereign Good, which alone can satisfy the heart of man: according to that of the Psalmist (Ps. xvi. 15), "I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear." Here they shall be filled with the grace of God, raining down upon them from above; hereafter they shall be plunged into that immense ocean of the Deity, where they shall be brimful of God for all eternity.

Conclusion. Direct the appetite towards "the good things of the Lord, in the land of the living:" and in the meantime towards fulfilling His justice. But take care not to be depraved

with the false sweets of worldly, sensual, and carnal pleasures. These will take away from thee all relish for the things of God: they will never fill thee, nor satisfy thee themselves, nor suffer thee to taste, either in time or eternity, how sweet is the Lord.

SEPTEMBER 6.

On being Merciful.

1. Consider the words of the fifth beatitude; "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy:" and reflect on the necessity we continually lie under of the mercy of God, and how easy a means our Lord has furnished us with for obtaining this mercy. All our good must come from God; and as we have rendered ourselves unworthy of any good at all by our sins, we can allege nothing for ourselves; but can only appeal to the divine mercy, that He may give us the graces we have not deserved, and forgive us the punishments we have deserved, and the sins by which we have deserved them. So that finding mercy with God is all in all; and the means of finding this mercy is, to show mercy to one another. "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given to you" (Luke vi. 37, 33). How lovely, how beautiful, how beneficial both for time and eternity is this virtue of mercy! How sweet are all her fruits! She is the favourite of heaven, and makes all her lovers favourites of heaven; she is the eldest daughter of the great King (whose mercy distinguishes itself, and shines most brightly over all His works): she shows herself to all who seek her, she embraces all who love her; she carries them home with her to her father's house, even to the sacred mansions of a happy eternity.

2. Consider the ways of showing mercy that are recommended to us by the Word of God. Such are, 1. The works of mercy corporal, by alms-deeds; by feeding and clothing any of the poor members of Jesus Christ; by visiting and relieving the sick or imprisoned. Such works as these, according to the Scripture (Tob. xii. 9), "deliver from death, they purge away sins, and make us find mercy and life everlasting." "Such works as these entitle us to an eternal Kingdom" (Mat. xxv. 34, 35). 2. The works of mercy spiritual, by assisting or relieving our neighbours, in their spiritual necessities, by giving them good counsel or instruction; by comforting them under their afflictions; by encouraging them in time of temptation; but especially by reclaiming them from their errors and vices, and by that means delivering their souls from the second and everlasting death; and putting them in the right way of coming to live for ever with the living God. How acceptable to God; how precious in His sight are these spiritual works of mercy! The Son of God came down from heaven to

exercise these kinds of works upon earth : in these He employed the days of His mortal life. Let us be glad to follow this great example, so far as our weakness will allow us !

3. Consider the reward promised to the merciful, that they shall obtain mercy : and that both here, as well temporally as spiritually, by having their own wants redressed and their sins forgiven them ; and hereafter by being received into everlasting dwellings, by those to whom they had here shown mercy ; and finding there the fruit of the seed of mercy they had here sown multiplied to a hundredfold. Alas ! how wretched shall the best of us be, if God does not show us mercy ! for who can stand the judgment of God, if His mercy be set aside ? How happy then are they, who, by being merciful to one another, ensure to themselves the mercy of God in the time of need ! But on the other hand, how unhappy are they who refuse to show mercy to their neighbours ! For "judgment without mercy to them that have not done mercy," saith St. James (ii. 13).

Conclusion. Be ever merciful to thy neighbours, that thou mayest find mercy with God. For "with the same measure you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again" (Luke vi. 38) ; yea with infinite advantage according to that of the same Gospel ; "good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together and running over, shall they give into your bosom" (Luke vi. 38).

SEPTEMBER 7.

On Cleanness of Heart.

1. Consider the words of the sixth beatitude : "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." God is not to be seen by the eyes of the body, but by the interior eyes of the soul. Now as the bodily eyes, in order to contemplate their proper objects, must be clean (for if any speck interpose, and cover the sight, the object cannot be seen), so the interior eye of the soul, in order to see God, must be clean ; the sight must not be covered with any speck of earthly dirt, that is, with disorderly affection to anything in this world. This cleanness of the inward eye requires two things, simplicity in the intention, purity in the affection : with these two wings, a man is lifted up above the things of the earth : simplicity aims at God alone ; purity takes hold of Him, embraces Him and adheres to Him. "Seek God," says the wise man, "in simplicity of heart" (Wisd. i. 1), that is, in the uprightness and sincerity of a single heart, of a heart free from double-dealing and the guile of self-seeking instead of seeking God. Let the eye of the intention be simple, that is single and sincere, and truly directed to God ; and then the whole body of the actions shall be lightsome (Matt. vi. 22). Let God

be the object of thy love, so as to admit of no affection that takes off thy heart from Him: and thy heart will be truly pure and clean, and qualified to contemplate and embrace thy God.

2. Consider the degrees by which we ascend to this perfect purity and cleanness of heart. The first, and most necessary purgation, is from all mortal sin and from affection to it. For the heart that voluntarily admits affection to mortal sin (whether it be the sin of impurity or any other vice), is absolutely unclean, and is possessed by an unclean spirit, and therefore can have no share in God. The second purgation goes further, and not only settles the soul in a fixed determination, never to consent on any account not even in thought to a mortal sin, but also cleanses the heart from all wilful affection to venial sin, and fixes her in a resolution never, with deliberation, to commit a known venial sin; much less to indulge any habit or custom of sin. All these sins, when deliberate, are so many spots and stains which strangely disfigure the beauty of the soul, make her unworthy of the embraces of her heavenly Spouse, and darken the eye of the soul so as to disqualify it for seeing God. Therefore such spots and stains must be purged away, if we would be truly clean of heart.

3. Consider that in order to be clean of heart, the heart must be purged from affection to worldly honours, riches and pleasures; from all disorderly love of the creature, to the prejudice of the love of the Creator; and from every affection that takes off any part of the heart from God: which indeed is always the case when we love any person or thing, not for God's sake, or with due subordination to the love of God. Whatsoever love cannot stand this test is more or less unclean; it divides the heart; it sullies its purity; and disqualifies it for seeing God. See then, my soul, what an evil it is to suffer any irregular affection to possess thy heart; since it hinders thee from so great a good, even the sight of God, thy only true and Sovereign Good!

Conclusion. Be ever jealous of the purity of thy heart: labour daily to purge it more and more, not only from wilful sin, but from every earthly affection that can any way sully it, or overcloud its inward sight with the exhalations that are always arising from sensual and worldly love.

SEPTEMBER 8.

On the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin.

1. Consider that on this day the Church devoutly celebrates the birthday of the great Queen who brought forth to us the King of Heaven, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the source of all good. This birth was the first dawning of that happy day

which the Son of God, the true Sun of Justice, brought us from heaven, in the light of which, if we walk during our mortal pilgrimage, we shall come securely to that blessed day which knows no night. On this festival of the blessed Virgin, Mother of God, we ought, in the first place, to praise and bless God, and give Him thanks for all His graces bestowed upon her; by which He prepared her soul and body, from her very conception, to be a worthy dwelling for His Son, holy and without spot or blemish: secondly, to honour Him in this blessed Virgin and to rejoice in the wonders of His power, goodness and mercy, by which He paved the way for our redemption: thirdly, to show a true and solid devotion to our blessed Lady, by earnest application to her for her prayers and intercession; and a zealous imitation of her virtues.

2. Consider the grounds which all good Christians have, and always had, to be devout to the blessed Virgin: as we find in every age, the more eminent any persons have been in the love of Jesus Christ, the more devoted they have also been to His blessed Mother; verifying by their practice, in this regard, that prophecy of hers (Luke i.), that "all generations shall call her blessed." These grounds may be reduced to three heads: her dignity, her sanctity, and her elevation in glory. 1. Her supereminent dignity of Mother of God; the nearest alliance which any pure creature can have with Him. And how can we love Him, and not love His Mother? 2. Her supereminent sanctity; for she was full of divine grace, even before she conceived (Luke i. 26); how much more after carrying in her womb for nine months the source of all grace and sanctity? And what shall we say of the thirty years she had Him always before her eyes, and still more in her heart; and of the remaining space of her life, during which she was continually growing in grace; God on His part never ceasing to bestow, with a most bountiful hand, and she on her part never receiving His grace in vain, but ever corresponding and co-operating with it; and by this means continually drawing down new blessings? 3. Her supereminent elevation in the eternal glory of heaven, in proportion to the supereminent grace and sanctity, to which she arrived here upon earth (as the one is always the measure of the other) and the interest she has with her divine Son, in consequence thereof. See my soul, how many and how pressing motives thou hast to be devout to this blessed Lady.

3. Consider that as God is the sole author, and the original source of all the dignity, sanctity and glory which we honour in the blessed Virgin; so all that veneration, which the Catholic Church pays to this blessed Lady, has God both for its beginning and its end. Our devotion to her, proceeds from the love we bear her Son: we honour in her His gifts and graces: we love and honour her for His sake, and all the extraordinary respect we

at any time show to her, we refer to His greater glory. So far then from robbing God of any part of His honour by the veneration we give her, we honour Him indeed so much the more, because all our devotion finally tends to Him, and terminates in Him. And thus we always find, that such as are truly devout to the blessed Virgin, fail not to be also true lovers of God, and pursuers of good works.

Conclusion. Embrace this devotion to our blessed Lady as an excellent means to advance thee in all good; but do not imagine thyself to be truly devout to her if thou art in no way solicitous to imitate her virtues. True devotion loves, esteems, and honours in her that which God loves, esteems, and honours—her virtues and sanctity. And how can we better show our love, esteem, and honour for virtue and sanctity, than by labouring to imitate them?

SEPTEMBER 9.

On being Peacemakers.

1. Consider the words of the seventh beatitude: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." God's own abode is in eternal peace; and the heavenly Jerusalem is the vision and enjoyment of undisturbed everlasting peace. They therefore who truly love peace, and, as much as lies in them, both keep it in themselves and with others, and contribute all they can to make peace among such as are at variance with one another, and to bring all their neighbours to be at peace with God, are entitled to this beatitude, and to the glorious character of children of God. How amiable is this spirit of peace! How blessed are its fruits! It is the paradise of the soul: it makes a kind of a heaven upon earth. May this "peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep both our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Phil. iii. 7).

2. Consider the different ways there are of being peacemakers, with relation to our neighbours, to ourselves, and to God. It is a blessed thing to bring our neighbours to peace and mutual charity; as it is an abomination in the sight of God to sow discord among brethren (Prov. vi. 19). It is a more blessed thing to make peace at home in our own souls, by suppressing the rebellious disorders of our passions, by bringing the flesh under subjection to the spirit, the inferior part of the soul to the superior, and the superior to God. It is the most blessed thing of all to bring both ourselves and as many others as we can to constant and perfect peace with God, that He may reign without limit in our souls; that His kingdom may be perfectly established within us; that His holy will, His holy law, His grace, and His peace may live in and with us for ever. Happy peace, indeed,

that unites us here to God by grace, and hereafter in eternal glory!

3. Consider the reward promised in this beatitude to peace-makers: "they shall be called the children of God." Reflect, my soul, what a dignity is here, to be children of so great a King, even the King who made heaven and earth. "Behold what manner of charity," said St. John (1 John iii. 1), "the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called" and should be "the sons of God." Sons of God, even now by His grace, bearing a resemblance with His true Son (who is styled in Scripture the Prince of Peace), and as such in a particular manner loved, cherished, and protected by Him here as a parent; and hereafter to be admitted to a more perfect likeness, union, and, as it were, transformation into Him, according to that of the same Apostle (ver. 2). Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like unto Him: because we shall see Him as He is. Christians, what blessings both for time and eternity are prepared for the lovers and promoters of peace!

Conclusion. Endeavour to be always a friend and a child of peace, and the peace of God shall always rest upon thee (Luke x. 6) and never leave thee, till it bring thee to the regions of everlasting peace.

SEPTEMBER 10.

On the Means of preserving and maintaining the Peace of the Soul.

1. Consider that it is of great advantage to the soul, in order to defend her from evil, and to advance her in good, to keep herself in peace, within her own interior: because this inward peace, when it is true, brings with it courage, strength, and grace, by the favour which God always shows to the truly peaceable. Now the first and most necessary means for acquiring and preserving this peace, must be to banish all wilful sin from the soul; for there can be no true peace where wilful sin resides. No one can be at war with God, and have peace within himself, except it be that false peace, which is sometimes formed by an erroneous conscience that shuts its eyes against God's light, that it may not be obliged to embrace His truth. Dear Jesus, never let me be so miserable as to be deluded by any such false peace, or be a rebel against thy light!

2. Consider that true peace of the soul is not to be acquired without subduing the passions. For what peace can there be in the midst of daily storms, tumults and rebellions, such as are raised by headstrong and untamed passions? What peace can there be for the slaves of pride and ambition, of avarice and

worldly solicitude, of wrath and envy? Alas! these and the like passions disturb and disquiet the soul, they put her in a ferment, they suffer her not to find solid rest or tranquillity, or any share in that calmness and evenness of soul, which they enjoy who are masters of themselves, by the victory they have acquired over their passions. How true it is that our peace and happiness, even here, is not to be found by yielding to disorderly inclinations, but by mortifying and overcoming them.

3. Consider that the way to acquire true peace, and true liberty of soul, is thus marked out by a servant of God (Following of Christ, L. 3. C. 23): "Endeavour, my son, rather to do the will of another than thy own; ever choose rather to have less than more; always seek the lowest place, and to be inferior to every one; always wish and pray that the will of God may be entirely fulfilled in thee. Behold such a man as this enters upon the coasts of peace and rest." Whosoever will but observe these rules shall not easily be disquieted, but rather shall meet with a paradise of delights in his soul. And we shall find upon examination, that whenever we are disturbed, it is because we have transgressed some or other of these rules; either by being too much bent upon our own will, or by the desire of having more, or of being higher; or at least by not being entirely resigned to the will of God.

Conclusion. Set out in quest of this happy way that leads to true peace, by giving up thy own desires and ever embracing the holy will of God.

SEPTEMBER 11.

On suffering Persecution for Justice sake.

1. Consider these words of the eighth beatitude: Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And again, Blessed are ye, when men shall revile and persecute you, and shall say all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake; be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. How opposite is this gospel doctrine to the sentiments of flesh and blood? Alas! we have naturally so little relish for such sufferings as these, that we are apt to pity those, and look upon them as unhappy and miserable, who are exposed to such kind of evils; and so far from rejoicing, when it is our own case, we are too often dejected and sorrowful. But surely we are in the wrong, since truth itself, that cannot be deceived, not only assures us that these sufferings are the way to be blessed, that is, to be happy hereafter; but that even now, whilst we are actually suffering, we are in very deed happy, and blessed; and therefore He calls upon us to be glad and rejoice under the experi-

ence of those reputed evils, as being indeed real good in our regard, by the manifold fruits they produce, both in time and eternity.

2. Consider, what these fruits are that proceed from suffering for Christ's sake, and for His justice. They are fruits of grace here, and of glory hereafter. These kinds of sufferings wean the soul from the love of this world, and of all its empty toys and short-lived enjoyments and give her a longing desire after her true home, the happy region of truth and of life, the sight and enjoyment of her Sovereign Good. These sufferings entitle the soul to the sweet consolations of the Holy Ghost, which are usually bestowed more abundantly, in proportion to the greatness of the sufferings, according to that of the Psalmist (Ps. xciii. 19), "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul." These sufferings give the soul a relish for the Cross, and a new kind of love for her crucified Saviour. These sufferings teach her humility, meekness, patience, conformity to the will of God, with the other lessons, that are to be learned in the school of the Cross ; besides the happy opportunity they afford the soul of discharging the debt of punishment due for former sins, by offering up to God, and bearing in a Christian manner these present afflictions.

3. Consider that the principal fruits of these sufferings are reserved, to be gathered in another life : according to that of the Apostle (Rom. viii. 17, 18), "If we suffer with Christ, we shall be glorified with Him. For the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." And again (2 Cor. iv. 17), "Our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." Look forward, my soul, into this immense eternity, and contemplate the infinite rewards that are there laid up, to recompense our little sufferings here ; and learn to be glad and rejoice in the experience of these small temporal afflictions, because these put thee in the true way to joys that shall never end : and the greater thy sufferings are here, the greater shall be these joys hereafter.

Conclusion. Do not pretend to a life without sufferings, if thou hopest to live for ever with God, but then take care not to draw down sufferings upon thy head by any crime, for this would not be suffering for justice sake. Give ear to St. Peter (1 Pet. iv. 15, 16), "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a railer, or a coveter of other men's things. But if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name."

SEPTEMBER 12.

Of the Virtue of Patience.

1. Consider that patience is a virtue by which we bear up with courage and constancy under a variety of evils to which we are exposed in this mortal life, such as afflictions, exterior or interior, sicknesses, pains of body or mind, losses, disappointments, want, affronts, injuries, and other crosses of divers kinds, which more or less are incident to men, in every station of life, from the king to the beggar, from our childhood to our decrepit age. Now under all these evils the good Christian is supported by the virtue of patience, in such a manner as neither to be overmuch cast down by accidents or sufferings; nor upon these occasions to be put out of the road of virtue, or hindered from the love and service of God; but so as still to go on with courage in his way to heaven, carrying his cross after his Redeemer, without murmuring or repining. My soul, how lovely is this Christian patience! It has even the admirable property of turning all the evils of life into so many great and solid goods, by making them serviceable to eternity: and in the mean time it makes them both light and easy; and sweetens all that is bitter in them, by seasoning them with the consideration of the holy will of God.

2. Consider how much this virtue of patience is recommended, by the great example of the Son of God; who, as He was never free from sufferings, in any part of His life, so He both lived and died in the exercise of patience; and by His patience redeemed the world. Then all the saints and martyrs, as they had their share in drinking of His cup of sufferings, so they have all run with patience to the fight set before them; looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who having joy set before Him endured the cross (Heb. xii. 1, 2). They all in life possessed their souls in their patience (Luke xxi. 19). They all in death saved their souls by patience. Patience hath a perfect work, saith St. James (i. 4) that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing. He that is patient, saith the wise man (Prov. xiv. 29), is governed with much wisdom. And again (Prov. xvi. 32), the patient man is better than the valiant, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh cities. Patience then is the virtue of martyrs and saints; patience made them martyrs and saints; patience made them truly wise; patience gave them the victory over all their enemies; in their patience they brought forth much fruit; patience made them perfect; patience brought them to that incorruptible crown, which is given to none but those who by patience have lawfully striven for it, and won it. O blessed patience! Let me be so happy as to find thee, and embrace thee; let me live and die in thy company.

3. Consider, the absolute necessity of patience, in order to serve God here, and save our souls hereafter. Patience is necessary for you, saith the Apostle (Heb. x. 36), that doing the will of God, you may receive the promise. For our life is a warfare upon earth; and in every part of life we must expect to meet with trials, conflicts, and sufferings. Now patience turns all these to our good; but where patience is wanting, all goes wrong; we sin at every step; we cowardly give up the cause of God and our souls, upon every slight occasion; we withdraw ourselves from the service we were happily engaged in; we run from our colours, we fall a prey to the enemy. Oh, it is true, that as there is no going to heaven but through many tribulations (Acts xiv. 21), so there is no securing to ourselves that blessed kingdom, but by much patience.

Conclusion. Give ear to the admonitions of the Spirit of God, (Eccles ii.), Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation. Humble thy heart, and endure—wait on God with patience; join thyself to God, and endure—take all that shall be brought upon thee, and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience: for gold and silver are tried in the fire: but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation. Happy they who practise these lessons!

SEPTEMBER 13.

On the Means of acquiring Patience.

1. Consider that patience, like all other good things, is not to be acquired by merely desiring, seeking, or praying for it; but by desiring it earnestly, seeking it diligently, praying for it fervently. "If any one wants this true wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all abundantly—and it shall be given him: but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James i. 5, 6). But how shall we heartily desire, seek, or pray for that which we have little or no esteem for? Wherefore the first step towards acquiring patience, is to study its true value, and the great treasures it brings with it to the soul, which is so happy as to find it. Now this knowledge must come by consideration, and meditation on the manifold fruit it produces, both for this world and the next; here, a complete victory over our enemies, peace of soul, true liberty, and dominion over our passions, with abundance of other graces; and hereafter, all those sublime rewards that are promised to the conqueror (Apoc. ii. and iii.), "To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, that is in the Paradise of my God" (Apoc. ii. 7). "He that shall overcome, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more, and I will write upon him the name

of my God" (Apoc. iii. 12). "And to him that shall overcome I will give to sit with me on my throne" (ver. 21).

2. Consider that in order to acquire patience, it will be of great service to us in our afflictions, pains, or other sufferings, to reflect on these three points: 1. Upon what we have deserved by our sins and how very little what we suffer is, in comparison with what we ought to suffer, if we had our deserts. 2. Upon the sufferings the Son of God endured for our sins, out of love for us, and the patience with which He endured them. 3. On the holy will of God, who sends us these sufferings for our greater good; who knows what is best for us, and orders all things for the best, if we leave ourselves to Him. How vain it is for us to resist His mighty hand! How foolish and sinful not to submit to the dispositions of Him who is infinitely wise and infinitely good! See, my soul, what a large field for meditation is opened to us in these three points! What motives for patience under all our sufferings!

3. Consider, in order to be more in earnest in seeking to acquire the virtue of patience, the manifold evils we are exposed to by impatience in a long train of sins against God, our neighbours and ourselves, which proceed from this unhappy source; murmurings and rebellions against God, uncharitable censures and rash judgments, perpetual animosities, quarrels, and desires of revenge against our neighbours; desires of our own death, though infinitely unfit for it, continual uneasiness with ourselves, desponding thoughts, and a strange sluggishness, in taking any pains for the salvation of our soul. Such are usually the wretched fruits of impatience; and what can be worse? Faith is lulled asleep, it is dead; hope is forgotten; the love of God and of our neighbour is lost: prayer is neglected, the care of the soul is flung away; and in the meantime the evils under which we labour, instead of being redressed, become more grievous and intolerable by our impatient resistance to the holy will of God; we lose the benefit of our sufferings, and we forfeit all the comfort which God usually affords to patient sufferers. How does this impatience make our sufferings resemble those of the damned, who suffer without merit and without comfort, resisting in vain the will of the Almighty.

Conclusion. Pray and labour in earnest to acquire the virtue of patience: it will make thy sufferings light and easy, and entitle them to an eternal reward. Whenever thou art visited with any cross, of what kind soever, consider it as coming from the hand of God; accept it, and offer it to Jesus Christ crucified, to be united to His sufferings, to be sanctified through Him, and accepted by His Father, for His own greater glory, and the remission of thy sins. How happy shalt thou be if under all thy sufferings thou make this thy practice!

SEPTEMBER 14.

On the Exaltation of the Cross.

1. Consider that on this day of the recovery of the Cross of Christ from the hands of Infidels, and the triumphant setting it up again in the Church of Mount Calvary; the Church of God celebrates the Exaltation of Him who died for us upon the cross, and His glorious triumph over sin and death and the powers of hell; and in consequence thereof, the establishment of His kingdom, by which He reigns, by Grace at present, in the souls of His servants throughout the world; and shall reign in them for all eternity hereafter in glory. According to that of St. John (xii. 31, 32) spoken with relation to His victory on the cross. "Now is the judgment (that is the condemation) of the world. now shall the prince of this world (the Devil) be cast out." "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself.' Rejoice, my soul, in the triumph of thy crucified King; and beg that He would establish His reign in thee, and draw thy heart from this wretched earth, and unite it for ever to Himself.

2. Consider, that the dispositions of a Christian, in order to celebrate in a proper manner the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, ought to be suitable to the maxims of the cross, and to the dispositions of Christ crucified. Dispositions of standing off from the pride, ambition, avarice, and vanity of the world, condemned by the poverty and humility of the cross; as also from the love of sensual and worldly pleasures, condemned by the mortification of the cross. Dispositions of taking up our cross and following our crucified King even to the death of the cross. Dispositions of waging perpetual war against that triple concupiscence, which separates worldlings from the cross of Christ, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; till dying to the world, and to ourselves, we be lifted up with Christ from the earth; crucified to the world, and the world to us; and thus entitled to a share in His exaltation and triumphs. But, my soul, how unfit are we to celebrate the victory of our crucified King, over death, sin, and hell; whilst we by pride, self-love, and the love of the world, wilfully remain slaves to those enemies, whose usurpation He sought to abolish by His death!

3. Consider the sentiments of St. Paul, with relation to the cross of Christ (Gal. ii. 19, 20), "With Christ I am nailed to the Cross." "And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me; who loved me and delivered Himself for me" (chap vi. 14). "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world!" He tells the Corinthians (1 Cor. ii. 2), "that he judged not himself to know any thing among them but Jesus Christ, and

Him crucified." And (chap. i. 23, 24) that he preached nothing but "Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles; but to the true believers the power of God, and the wisdom of God." He proposes his own conduct as a model to the Philippians" (Phil. iii. 17, 18), and warns them with tears against sensual and earthly-minded Christians, whom he calls enemies of the cross of Christ. Oh, how high was the cross exalted in the heart of the Apostle! It reigned there without a rival. And as it was exalted in him by love and esteem, so it exalted him here to the glorious fellowship of the sufferings of Christ crucified; and hereafter to that eternal kingdom which our Lord purchased by His cross for all the true friends and followers of the cross. How happy are they who, like the Apostle, are sincere lovers of the cross of Christ.

Conclusion. Honour the triumph of thy crucified King by planting thyself at the foot of His cross and there constantly attending to Him, and studying well the lessons He teaches thee from His cross, and entering into all His sentiments. He will teach thee to submit to thy crosses with patience, to undergo them with cheerfulness, yea, to embrace them with joy. He will undeceive thee, with regard to the false maxims of worldly pride, love of riches, and sensual pleasures; and from His cross will preach to thee His truth, and discover to thee the charms that are found in humility, poverty of spirit, contempt of the world, and mortification of the flesh. His cross is the school in which He will teach thee all good, and from which He will not cease to communicate to thee all grace, till at length He draw thee to Himself, and make thee His own for ever.

SEPTEMBER 15.

On the Presence of God.

1. Consider that it is a most certain truth, an article of faith, which no Christian can be allowed to doubt, that the great God who made us all, the eternal, incomprehensible, infinite Majesty, in whose comparison the whole creation is a mere nothing, is everywhere present, is truly and really in every place, and in every being; so that wheresoever we are, and wheresoever we go, God is there, and is there with all His divine attributes; the whole Deity, the whole blessed Trinity is there. "Shall a man be hid in secret places, and I not see him, saith the Lord?" "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" (Jer. xxii. 24); and (Psalm cxxxviii.), "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?" Or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there: if I descend into hell thou art there." And do Christians know this truth and yet dare to sin? Alas!

they cannot justly plead ignorance because it is one of the first things they have been taught from their very childhood. But the misery is, they think so little of God or His divine presence, that they quite forget it: so that we may say to them, with regard to the presence of God, what St. John Baptist said to the Jews with regard to their Messiah (John i. 26), "There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom ye know not." How little indeed is this great God known, even by too many who call themselves Christians!

2. Consider that God being everywhere present is witness to our thoughts, words, and actions; He sees and hears all that passes; nothing can be concealed from Him; no, not even the most secret motions and dispositions of the soul. "He is the searcher of the reins and heart (Apoc. ii. 23), reaching to the division of the soul and the spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and of the intents of the heart; neither is there any creature invisible in His sight, but all things are naked and open to His eyes" (Heb. iv. 12, 13). It is in vain then for the sinner to flatter himself, like the libertine, mentioned by the wise man (Eccles. xxiii. 25, &c.), that saith, "who seeth me?" "Darkness compasseth me about, and the walls cover me, and no man seeth me." "Whom do I fear?" And in the mean time he considereth not that darkness and light are alike to the Lord (Ps. cxxxviii. 12), and that His "eyes are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into their hearts, into the most secret parts." Oh, that men would always remember these great truths!

3. Consider that God is not only present with us in every place, and sees all that passes, but is really present within us; fills our whole soul, and is more truly, perfectly, and intimately in the very centre of the soul, giving, preserving, and maintaining its life and being, than the soul is in the body, which it animates, and to which it gives life and motion. He is the life of all lives, and the being of all beings, and were He to withdraw His presence, though but for a moment, from any being whatsoever, in that moment it would cease to be, and would return to its ancient nothing. "In him we live, and move, and have our being," saith the Apostle (Acts xvii. 28). So that we are not only encompassed with the Deity on all sides, as the birds are with the air in which they fly, or the fishes with the waters of the ocean, but are in such manner penetrated by Him, that He fills every part of our being with His whole self, so that it is strictly and literally true that we are always in Him, and He in us. What an aggravation then must it be to the guilt of our sins, that they not only are committed against God, and before His eyes, but are committed in God Himself, in whom we live, move, and exist.

Conclusion. Regret thy having thought so little hitherto of the presence of God; by which He is in all places and in all things,

and more especially in the midst of thyself. Resolve to have this truth ever before thy eyes for the time to come. Let us strive, my soul, to be always with Him who is always with us.

SEPTEMBER 16.

On the Exercise of the Presence of God.

1. Consider that a lively sense of the presence of God, is a sovereign means to banish sin from the world ; to bring the worst of sinners back to God ; to spur on the lukewarm, and make them fervent ; and to advance the just in all virtues, till it bring them to perfection ; according to that which God spoke to His servant Abraham (Gen. xvii. 1), "Walk before Me, and be perfect," as if He should have said, In all thy conversation, and in every step thou shalt take in thy mortal pilgrimage, keep thyself in My presence, by remembrance of Me, and thou shalt be perfect in all virtue. This holy patriarch, and all the ancient Fathers observed this lesson, of whom it is written, that they "walked with God, or that they walked in the sight of God" (Gen. xlviii. 15). The Psalmist practised the same (Ps. xvi. 8), "I set the Lord," saith he, "always in my sight ;" and he calls upon others to do the like (Ps. civ. 4) : "Seek ye the Lord, and be strengthened : seek His face" (that is His presence) "always." This has ever been the practice of the saints : yea, it is this has made them saints.

2. Consider that this exercise of the presence of God is to be performed, partly by the understanding, and partly by the will ; for the blessed in heaven are eternally employed about God, by the contemplation and vision of Him, which belong to the understanding, and by love and fruition, which belong to the will. By this means they are eternally happy in the enjoyment of this sovereign and infinite good ; and eternally united both by will and understanding to the source of all happiness. Thus, the souls of God's servants upon earth ought, in both these ways, to apply themselves to God, and be employed about Him ; and this is done by the exercise of His divine presence, which employs the understanding in the thought and remembrance of Him, by means of a lively faith and sense of His being always with us and within us : and entertains the will, that is the heart and the affection, with Him, by continually turning it towards Him, by aspirations of love, by the oblation of our whole being to Him, and by longing desires of eternal union with Him. How happy is this exercise of the presence of God, which by perpetual application of the powers of the soul to God, in some measure anticipates the immortal joys of heaven.

3. Consider that in order to learn and practise this heavenly exercise of the presence of God, we must rid our souls of three

mortal enemies to this devotion; which are dissipation of mind; anxious solicitude for the things of this world; and disorderly affection to creatures. Where these three, or any one of the three, reign in the soul, God is usually forgotten. Dissipation of thought carries the soul from home, to run after the multitude of vain amusements, where she loses the remembrance both of herself and her God. Worldly solicitude chokes all better thoughts, and suffers them not to take root in the soul. And the disorderly affection of the heart to anything out of God, turns away the heart from Him. In order then to practise this necessary attention to the presence of God, we must banish dissipation by recollection of thought; we must overcome worldly solicitude by faith and confidence in God, and by conformity in all things with His blessed will; and we must correct the irregularity of our affections by turning them from the creature to the Creator.

Conclusion. Guard against these enemies, by setting a watch both upon thy roving imagination, which is ever fond of running after trifles, and thy unwary heart, that is so easily taken in the nets of wanton love or other idle, vain, and worldly affections; and accustom the powers of thy soul to be employed about their God, who is to make them happy for eternity.

SEPTEMBER 17.

On the Advantages of the Exercise of the Presence of God.

1. Consider that as forgetting God is the source of all sins, so the remembrance of His divine presence is the source of all our good; it is of infinite advantage both to sinners and to saints. It is a sovereign and universal remedy for overcoming all sorts of temptations, by placing the soul near the source of light and grace, and hiding her as it were under the divine wings; and it is putting at the same time a most powerful and effectual restraint upon her, from daring to offend that tremendous Majesty. For who shall dare by sin to commit high treason against God, who sees God before him, and himself surrounded by God? Or who shall dare to affront the divine justice, who has a lively sense of its being so very near him, and that it stands always turned against wilful sinners? It is true that the consideration of the eye of God being always upon us, has obliged the most abandoned sinners to put a stop at once to their wicked ways, and betake themselves to a life of penance. It was the case of the famous Thais, who upon this consideration, was suddenly determined to quit both her sins and the world, and withdraw herself into the remotest parts of the desert; where, shut up in a lonesome cell, she spent the remainder of her days in weeping and doing penance for her sins.

2. Consider that a lively sense of the presence of God excites us to perform all our works with due perfection in order to please Him, whose eye is always upon us : as the master's eye makes the servant more diligent. It helps to purify our intention in all things, by drawing it to God. It cures our lukewarmness ; it dissipates our distractions ; it teaches us to pray ; it makes us fervent in our addresses to the Divine Majesty ; it keeps us humble on all occasions, and perfectly annihilates the soul, seeing herself placed so near to the great God. And as the soul, that has a due sense of the presence of God, knows that wheresoever He is, He has all His attributes with Him ; His almighty power, His infinite wisdom, goodness, and mercy ; His perpetual providence and loving-kindness for His children, together with the treasures of divine grace : such a soul as this finds, in the thought of God's presence, a source of unspeakable comfort in her tribulations, of counsel in her doubts, of succour in her necessities, and a continual attraction to the love of Him. How easy must it be to be a saint, with such helps as these ! Now all these graces, and more, are laid up for thee, my soul, if thou wilt duly exercise thyself in the presence of God.

3. Consider the practical inferences we ought to make from our faith in the presence of God ; that is, what we are bound to do in consequence of believing that God is everywhere, with us, and in us. 1. God's being everywhere, requires of us that we should everywhere take notice of His presence. For can there be an object more worthy of our attention ? And will He not be justly offended if, while we amuse ourselves about every trifle that comes in our way, we let our God, Sovereign Beauty and Sovereign Good, pass unregarded ? 2. God being everywhere present, requires of us both a modest comportment on all occasions as to our exterior : "Let your modesty," says St. Paul (Phil. iv. 5), "be known to all men, the Lord is nigh :" and a most profound respect, as to our interior, considering that Infinite Majesty in whose sight we stand. 3. God being everywhere present, everywhere requires our love : for wherever we are, we have Him with us, who is infinitely lovely and infinitely loving ; infinitely good in Himself, and infinitely good to us : and therefore wherever we are, He challenges our love. Turn thyself then, my soul, from these earthly toys to thy sovereign good, which is so near to thee ; run to His embrace, and dedicate thyself entirely to His divine love.

Conclusion. Never regret being alone, since thou hast always in thy company the great God, the sight and enjoyment of whom is the eternal felicity of the angels. No company can be more honourable ; none more advantageous, since thou hast the inexhausted source of all good. His conversation is most delightful ; the sweetest repose is to be found in Him ; all other recreations are vain, if compared with this.

SEPTEMBER 18.

On the Virtue of Obedience.

1. Consider that obedience is a virtue which teaches us readily to embrace, and diligently to put into execution, whatever is commanded us, either immediately by God Himself, or by our lawful superiors who have their authority from God, and whom He commands us to submit to and obey for His sake (1 Pet. ii. 13). This virtue, like humility, her mother, is the special favourite of heaven ; as God has abundantly declared, by preferring on many occasions our obedience before all other sacrifices we can offer Him. "Doth the Lord desire holocausts and victims," said Samuel to Saul (1 Sam. xv. 22, 23), "and not rather that His voice should be obeyed?" For obedience is better than sacrifices, and to hearken, rather than to offer the fat of rams : because it is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel, and like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey, inasmuch as disobedience takes away from God, and makes over to His enemy the best offering our poor stock can afford ; that is, our will. Now, our will He chiefly calls for ; and whatsoever else we give Him is nothing, so long as we refuse to give Him our will by obedience. The sacrifice of our hearts He calls for, and not for that of our flocks, or of anything we can give Him without obedience.

2. Consider how precious in the sight of God this virtue of obedience must be, since He singled it out amongst all virtues, to be the exercise of our first parents, immediately on their creation in the earthly paradise ; that by acts of it they might acknowledge their dependence on their Creator, show their inviolable fidelity to Him, and merit, by perseverance in obedience, an eternal union with Him. The happiness or misery, both of them and of their posterity, that is of all mankind both for time and eternity, was to be determined by their obedience or disobedience. But, oh, the dismal train of evils they have entailed upon us by withdrawing their necks from the sweet yoke of obedience ! Evils that must have been without remedy for ever, had not the obedience of the Second Adam stepped in to cancel the disobedience of the first. According to that of the Apostle (Rom. v. 19), "As by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one man many shall be made just." The disobedience of the first parents of our flesh involved us all in sin : the obedience of the true parent of our spirit has purchased mercy, grace and salvation, for our souls. But all this good purchased for us by the obedience of the Son of God is not ours but on condition of returning to our duty, by obedience to Him who became the cause of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Heb. v. 9).

3. Consider that such as have pleased God from the beginning have all been eminent in the virtue of obedience. This, joined with faith, made Abraham the favourite of God, and procured for him that all generations should be blessed in his seed. This was the virtue of the patriarchs and prophets, and of all the saints of God. Rather die than not obey, was the maxim of the saints. But the great pattern of obedience was the Saint of saints, whose whole life, from the first instant of His conception till His expiring on the cross, was one continued exercise of the most consummate obedience. All the thoughts, words, and actions of His mortal life were the fruit of obedience: they all aimed at doing His Father's will and obeying His commandments. "I came down from heaven," says He (John vi. 38), "not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, that I may perfect His work" (John iv. 34). "I seek not my own will, but the will of Him that sent me" (John v. 30). "I lay down my life of myself, and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John x. 18). "I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father who sent me, He gave Me commandment what I should say, and what I should speak" (John xii. 49). "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8), that we might enter into the like sentiments of perpetual obedience and humility (ver. 5). And shall not this great example of the Son of God Himself inspire us with an ardent desire of living and dying in the arms of obedience?

Conclusion. If thou desire to please God, offer Him continually the sacrifice of thy heart, will, and liberty, by perfect obedience, for His own sake, "and to every human creature for God's sake" (1 Pet. ii. 13), that is, to all that have authority from God over thee, whether in Church or in State. In obeying them, thou obeyest God (Luke x. 16); in resisting them, thou "resisteth the ordinance of God to thy own damnation" (Rom. xiii. 2).

SEPTEMBER 19.

On the Fruits of Obedience.

1. Consider that one of the deepest wounds sin has left in the soul of man is a love of independence; a desire of being his own master; and of living, and acting, according to his own inclinations, without being controlled by rule or law, or by the will of any other. Here is the seat of pride, the throne of self-love, and the source of the worst of our passions. Now the virtue that heals this wound is holy obedience, which strikes at the root of all these evils, inasmuch as it casts down that

pride, which affects liberty and independence; drives self-love out of its intrenchments; keeps the passions under, by obliging them to submit to the will and law of God, and to the command of every vicegerent of His; and ceases not till it has bound that tyrant self-will and laid him as a holocaust on the altar of God. And are not these, my soul, most admirable fruits, which this blessed obedience produces by resolute subjection of our own will to the will of God, and to every lawful superior, for God's sake?

2. Consider what mischief is continually produced in the soul by self-will wherever it reigns; to the end thou mayest set a greater value on the virtue of obedience, which gets the victory over this hellish monster, the source of all our vices. Give ear to St. Bernard (Serm. 3, de Resurrect): "Self-will," says he, "is a perpetual enemy to God; it wages a most cruel war against Him. What does God hate? What does He punish at any time, but self-will? Take away self-will, and there shall be no hell: for what is there that raging fire can take hold on but self-will? ——This fury attacks the Lord of Majesty; it withdraws itself from His command, making itself its own master—and as much as lies in it, it robs Him of all that is His." He adds that it sets no bounds to its pretensions, that "the whole creation cannot satisfy its demands, that it sets itself up in opposition to the Creator Himself." Yes, Christians, but this is not all: where this monster reigns, it not only fills the soul with all kinds of evils; it even blasts and corrupts the very best of her actions, insomuch that where a man does not strive to overcome himself and subdue self-will, his virtue will be found to be false and counterfeit, and all his labours in the service of God, or his neighbours, useless and fruitless; as being only productions of his own humour, pride, and self-love; and not done for God. See then, my soul, how much it imports thee to get rid of this self-will, this mother of all mischief; and to acquire a perfect victory over it by the virtue of obedience.

3. Consider the other manifold blessings that attend the true children of obedience as fruits of this excellent tree. A life of perpetual obedience, is a victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil: according to that of the wise man (Prov. xxi. 28), "An obedient man shall speak of victory: whereas the disobedient man is a slave to these enemies." Obedience is a perpetual sacrifice, like a whole burnt-offering, by which a man offers his will, and all its offspring to God. It is a daily growing store of virtue and merit; it gives double value to our good actions, and consecrates the most indifferent, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and makes them highly acceptable in the sight of God. It leads us directly to God: and clearly points out to us in every thing, His holy will, the unerring rule of all our good. In fine, it brings the soul to a secure and sweet peace of

mind, and to a certain paradise of contentment and joy in the Lord, and in the accomplishment of His blessed will: because the more the soul seeks and loves, follows and embraces by means of holy obedience, this divine will of her God, the more she relishes His sweetness, the more confidently she flings herself into His arms, and the more securely she leaves herself, and all things else at His disposal; and commits all her interests to Him. How truly wise then are they who embrace with their whole souls this sweet yoke of obedience! They are walking in the royal highway, that leads to peace here and to heavenly bliss hereafter.

Conclusion. Set a great value upon this virtue of obedience, as the eldest daughter of humility, and the nursing mother of all other virtues. In every station of life, obey them to whom God has given authority over you, as God Himself: it is His will you should do so, and He has never sent more remarkable judgments, than upon those who have refused to obey the authority established by Him. The Son of God, during His whole life, was obedient not only to His Father, but also to His own creatures, to the blessed Virgin, to St. Joseph, to every one in authority, even to His very executioners. Let us learn to imitate Him.

SEPTEMBER 20.

On keeping the Commandments.

1. Consider that there is no salvation for us, without keeping the ten commandments. They are a short abstract of that natural and eternal law which was imprinted in the heart of man from the beginning, before the written law was delivered to the people of God. They were published by the Almighty, in a most solemn manner, from mount Sinai, in the Old Testament, and confirmed by the Son of God in the New Testament; declaring the observance of them to be a necessary condition to everlasting life. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments (Matt. xix. 17). Keeping these will have to be the test and proof of our love of Him. "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John xiv. 15). And His beloved disciple assures us (1 John ii. 4), that he that saith he knoweth Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But he that keepeth His commandments, abideth in Him, and He in him (chap. iii. 24). See, then, my soul, that the most necessary of all devotions is to dedicate thyself to the love and observance of the commandments of God: no devotion can bring thee to God without this. This is that instrument with ten strings, so often recommended by the Psalmist, which makes a most agreeable harmony in the ears of His divine Majesty.

2. Consider the happiness that always accompanies the keeping God's holy law and commandments; as the same royal prophet witnesses in many places, particularly in the 118th Psalm, which is full of testimonies to this effect. And in the 18th Psalm, "The law of the Lord," saith he, "is unspotted, converting souls: the testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones: the justices of the Lord are right, rejoicing hearts: the commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes: the fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves; more to be desired than gold and many precious stones, and sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. For thy servant keepeth them, and in keeping them there is a great reward." What encomiums are here heaped one upon another, of the law and commandments of God, and of the excellent fruits that grow from the observance of them! 1. The law of God is beautiful and pure, without spot or blemish; and it has a wonderful efficacy to turn the soul from sin to God. 2. It is faithful to what it proposes and promises; and imparts the truest of all wisdom to little ones, that is to the humble, who willingly submit their necks to its sweet yoke. 3. It is right in every tittle, agreeable to the sovereign reason, and carries with it joy to the hearts that embrace it. 4. It is full of spiritual light, to enlighten the inward eyes of the soul with divine truths. 5. It is most holy in itself, and comes from the fountain of all holiness, and makes all them holy that observe it; and endures with them for ever and ever. 6. It is true and just, as being given by eternal truth and justice, and justifies itself by its own evidence. 7. It is more amiable and desirable than all the treasures of the universe; and more sweet and delightful than anything this world can afford; by reason of the spiritual riches of virtue, grace and merit; and the manifold consolations and inward pleasures the observance of it brings to the soul; besides the reward hereafter which is incomprehensible and eternal.

3. Consider that the observance of the commandments of God is not only necessary to salvation, and every way admirable in the fruits it produces, both for this world and the next; but is indeed very sweet, and easy to men of good will. Our Lord assures us (Matt. xi. 30), that His yoke is sweet, and His burthen light: and that instead of oppressing us with its weight, it brings refreshment and rest to our soul. And St. John (1 John x. 3) tells us, that this is indeed the charity, or love of God that we keep His commandments; and that His commandments are not heavy. Love makes all things easy that are done for the sake of the beloved; and therefore the true lover of God finds no labour in the keeping His commandments: the grace of God makes them sweet and agreeable to him. Teach us, dear Lord, to love Thee, and command what Thou pleasest: Thy grace

will make all things easy and pleasant, that are to be done or suffered, for the love of Thee.

Conclusion. Seek thy happiness, both for time and eternity, in the observance of the law and commandments of God. Nothing else can make thee happy. Give ear to the Apostle (Rom. ii. 9, 10) Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil—but glory, and honour, and peace to every one that worketh good.

SEPTEMBER 21.

On St. Matthew.

1. Consider the wonders of divine grace in the call and conversion of St. Matthew; changed on a sudden from a worldling, a publican, and a sinner, to be a companion and disciple of Christ; and not long after advanced to be an Apostle, a pillar in Christ's Church, a preacher, powerful in word and work; a worker of miracles, a father and converter of nations; an Evangelist; and, in a word, a most eminent Saint. Glorify God, who has wrought these wonders, to manifest to all generations His infinite power, mercy, and goodness; and learn from this example never to despair of the conversion of any one, how remote soever he may seem to be from Christ. The arm of God is not shortened: His power, mercy, and goodness, are infinite now as ever; He is equally both able and willing to call poor sinners, and to convert them to Himself. But alas! our misfortune is, we are not so ready as Matthew was to attend to His heavenly calls, to correspond with His inspirations and graces; we prefer sitting still in the custom-house of the world, entangled in many vain and sinful affections to empty earthly toys, before rising to follow Christ who calls us to Him. How pernicious are all those affections which keep us from Christ!

2. Consider the lessons St. Matthew gives us in his conversion. 1. By immediately rising at the first call to correspond with his whole heart with the grace of God. How often have we been called to be disciples of Christ? And have we ever yet followed the call in good earnest? This follow thou Me, with which our Lord called Matthew, is indeed addressed by Him to all Christians, inasmuch as we are all called to be His followers, for the very name of Christian implies as much; and yet how few are there of those that call themselves Christians who truly follow in their lives either the doctrine or the example of Christ! Our Lord was passing by when He called Matthew, and very probably had that call been neglected, He might not have favoured him with the like grace another time. What obligations then have we not to His bounty and mercy for His repeated calls to us? But what

have we not to apprehend, if we continue to abuse His grace, by refusing to correspond with His calls? 2. St. Matthew left all to follow Christ; quitting his worldly business, upon which his livelihood depended, and whatsoever else he seemed to possess in this world; Christ does not call upon us to quit the business of our lawful callings, nor to give up at once all our worldly goods, but He insists on our taking off our hearts from these things, and parting with every affection that would keep us from Him. He expects we should follow Him, not so much by our bodily steps, as by giving Him the chief place in our affections, which are, as it were, the seat of the soul.

3. Consider that St. Matthew, immediately on his conversion, made a feast for our Saviour in his house; at which many publicans and sinners were present, who also followed our Lord (Mark. ii. 15). See the force of good example: and how one perfect conversion draws many others after it. This conversion of souls was a more agreeable feast to the divine charity of our Redeemer, than any other entertainment St. Matthew could have made for Him. Christians, reflect that the Son of God expects also to feast Himself with you, and to be entertained by you. Behold, says He (Apoc. iii. 20), I stand at the gate and knock: if any man shall hear My voice, and open to Me, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. We entertain Christ, by inviting Him into our inward house, and keeping ourselves at home with Him, by recollection and mental prayer: we feast Him, by giving Him our hearts, by love, by frequent and fervent oblations of the powers of our soul, and of our whole being to Him; and He feasts us in return, by giving Himself to us. O happy feast indeed, which is in some measure a foretaste of the eternal banquet of heaven!

Conclusion. Imitate St. Matthew, by ready compliance with all divine calls and inspirations; and by not suffering thyself to be kept from following Christ, with thy whole soul, either by the custom-house of the world, or by any of its painted toys. Let thy example serve to draw others to Him; and let the door of thy inward house be ever open to Him, to entertain Him, but close shut to His enemies, thy vicious and irregular affections.

SEPTEMBER 22.

On the Worship of God, enjoined by the first Commandment.

1. Consider that preface to the Ten Commandments (Exod. xx. 2), "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Learn from thence, who it is that enjoins these commandments; by what authority; and what urgent motives we have to obey His law. It is the

Lord Himself, who is our lawgiver; the eternal, immense, infinite Deity; the great Creator of heaven and earth; who made us, and all things; our God, our first beginning and our last end: and who shall dare refuse His commandments, or question His authority, or any of the manifold titles He has to our obedience? In these words, He particularly inculcated the obligation the people of Israel had, to keep His commandments; because He had delivered them out of the bondage of Egypt. How much more pressing motives have we Christians, to oblige us to a strict observance of His divine laws, because we have been redeemed by Him from a slavery infinitely worse than that of Egypt; the slavery of Satan, sin, and hell; and that by the precious blood of His only Son.

2. Consider that those words I am the Lord thy God, though not expressed in the form of a command, insinuate, nevertheless, the whole duty of man, with regard to his God; by which he is bound to worship Him, 1st, by faith, which bows down and adores God's truth, brings into captivity every understanding to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. x. 5), and casts down every proud thought or imagination, that raiseth itself up against His divine word. 2dly, by hope, which worships the almighty power, the infinite goodness and mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, and the veracity of His divine promises, by a firm and constant reliance upon Him, by building entirely on this rock, and fastening the anchor of the soul in Him. 3dly, by divine charity, by which he offers to God the sacrifice of his heart, by loving Him in all things, and above all things. 4thly, by the virtue of religion, which considering God as our first beginning, and our last end, daily worships Him in spirit and in truth; by adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; by the oblation of ourselves to His holy will, and of all things else to His glory; by joining in the offering of the great sacrifice of the Death and Passion of His Son; and by frequent and fervent prayer. See, my soul, thou never neglect any part of this Christian worship, which thy God expects at thy hands.

3. Consider that by this commandment, Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me: we are called upon not only to turn away from false gods, to the true and living God; and to renounce all that may in any way corrupt His worship with superstition or error; but also to make it the great business of our lives, to be truly godly, by serious application of our whole souls to the love and service of our Maker. For what will it avail us to know God, if we do not glorify Him nor serve Him? will not this be detaining the truth of God in injustice? (Rom. i. 6.) The great end of our creation was to glorify God, and to dedicate our lives to His service; we have, properly speaking, no other business upon earth; if we discharge ourselves well of this great duty, we are truly godly; and fulfil the first com-

mandment. But alas! how many thousands are there, calling themselves Christians, who live and die in the notorious breach of this commandment, by neglecting and forgetting their God, and giving to everything else the preference before Him and His service!

Conclusion. Have always before thy eyes, the worship thou owest to thy God, by this first commandment; and hence consecrate the days of thy pilgrimage to His divine love and service. This is the whole duty of man.

SEPTEMBER 23.

On the prohibition of Idol Worship.

1. Consider that making or worshipping any idol, is also forbidden by this divine Commandment: by which name is understood any image or other thing that is set up to be served, or honoured as God, or with divine honour. Our God is a jealous God, and will not allow His honour to be given to any other. As to that kind of idolatry which consists in setting up stocks and stones, there is no great danger of Christians incurring such guilt as this: because, as was long ago foretold by the prophets (Isa. ii. 18, &c.), that kind of idol worship has for many ages been abolished, where Christianity has been preached by the Apostles and their successors, the pastors and teachers of the Catholic Church. The idols that are more to be apprehended in these our days, are of another kind, those of wicked imaginations, errors and heresies; framed not by the hands, but by the heads, of proud, self-conceited men; deluding themselves, and seeking to delude as many others as they can, with the inventions of their own brain, or the suggestions of Satan, which they set up, and worship for divine Truths, and father upon the Word of God; in spite of the Church of God, and its authority, so strongly established, and recommended by that divine Word. Christians, beware of making to yourselves, or bowing down to such idols as these. But let the truth of God, promised you by the Church of God, be ever the object and rule of your faith and worship.

2. Consider the danger of another kind of idol, formed not by the brain, but by the disorderly affections of the heart; which too many, who call themselves Christians, prefer before the living God, and set up in opposition to Him, in His sanctuary, that is, in the temple of their soul, which at their baptism was consecrated to God. It is the case of the proud and ambitious, who make idols of their worldly honours: of all the worshippers of Mammon, the great God of worldlings; and of the lovers of pleasure more than of God. All these, in the language of St.

Paul, are idolaters; because they "worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever" (Rom. i. 25). And thou, my soul, hast thou no share in this kind of idolatry! Are there no idols of this sort in thy inward house, to confront the living God? Is there no predominant passion, or affection there which takes the place of God, by drawing thee to offend Him? Alas, how often have the very meanest of worldly toys and vanities been preferred by thee before Him! And as to that great idol self, the continual object of the worship of self-love and self-will, art thou not daily sacrificing thy God, and all things else to this insatiable monster? It is well if thou art not.

3. Consider that not only direct idolatry, but also superstition, is forbidden by the first commandment. Of this crime, those, in the first place, are guilty, who seek any knowledge or cure, help or assistance, from the enemy of God and man; by making use of such instruments, or means, as can have no effect of their own nature, or any otherwise, than by his interposition. For in all these cases, there is a correspondence kept up, and an implied compact made, with Satan or his agents; and consequently high treason committed against the divine Majesty. 2dly, the guilt of superstition is likewise incurred, by the observance of lucky and unlucky days, omens, and dreams. For all these are relics of paganism, and serve for nothing but to delude the soul, and lay her open to Satan; to take off her dependence from God and His divine Providence; and to transfer her faith to lying vanities and inventions of the devil. 3dly, the guilt of superstition is incurred, by corrupting the truth of God's worship, by placing religion in certain empty things, that have no tendency to His divine service, or to His greater glory; or by flattering one's self or others with an assurance of obtaining miraculous favours, or salvation, by the use, or practice of such things without any manner of warrant either of the Word of God, or of the Church of God. Beware, my soul, of any such errors!

Conclusion. Renounce in practice every branch of idol worship and superstition. Cast out of the house of God, which is within thee, every idol of the head and the heart, and let the Lord Jesus reign, without any rival, in all the powers of thy soul. Have nothing to do with His enemy, nor with any of his inventions, nor suffer His worship to be vitiated with any mixture of falsehood and lies.

SEPTEMBER 24.

On honouring God's holy Name.

1. Consider those words of the divine commandment (Exod. xx. 7), "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in

vain ; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take His name in vain." This commandment obliges us to show respect to the holy name of God ; and not to profane it by the heinous crime of blasphemy (which insults God's infinite majesty), or of perjury (which insults His truth, and makes Him witness to a lie). Let not such dreadful evils as these be found in the inheritance of Christ, or amongst the professors of the Christian name ! It would be wonderful if any nation were suffered to continue upon earth, that should encourage, or even tolerate such monstrous guilt. Moreover, this commandment forbids profane swearing and cursing, and all other irreverent use of the sacred name of God. How common is this guilt amongst Christians ! and how dismal are the consequences of it, in the manifold judgments of God, inflicted in punishment of those sins, both in this world and the next. True it is ; "The Lord will not hold him guiltless, that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain." Hence the wise man tells us (Ecclus. xiii. 12), "A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity, and a scourge shall not depart from his house."

2. Consider the different ways by which unhappy mortals daily violate and profane God's most sacred name. How they swear by it at every turn ; often falsely, often unjustly, generally rashly ; and thereby continually expose themselves to the danger of that enormous sin, of calling on God to be witness to their lies. How often do they not with equal rashness and profaneness, by curses and imprecations, presume to cite His divine Majesty, to execute the damnation, which every humour, or passion of theirs pronounces against some or other of His creatures ! How often in their madness do they not pronounce the like sentence, and call for vengeance, even upon their own souls ! How often is the sacred name of GOD brought in, even by the better sort, without rhyme or reason, to express every passion or emotion of their souls ? Alas, what liberty is here taken, by worms of the earth, with the tremendous Majesty of the God of heaven ! and shall all this pass unpunished ? To what a low ebb is Christianity come, when so many thousands who call themselves Christians, are more guilty by far, of profaning the holy name of God, than either Turks or Pagans ; and even glory in their guilt ! And thou, my soul, hast thou never gone into their council ; or has thy glory never been in their assembly ? See thou detest such wickedness ; and reclaim as many as thou canst from these ways of death. And if at any time thou hearest God's holy name thus profaned, lift up thy heart to heaven, and join with the choirs of blessed spirits there, in adoration, praise and love of the divine Majesty ; to make what amends thou canst for all these outrages offered to the King of heaven.

3. Consider that the great business of a Christian is to glorify the name of God, both by his tongue, and his life. We glorify

His holy name by the tongue, whenever we praise Him, and extol His mercies, when our words and conversation are directed to promote God's glory, and the edification of our neighbour. We glorify His holy name by our lives, when we live as becomes His children and His people; when our light so shines before men, that they glorify our Father who is in heaven. For as it is written concerning wicked livers, that through them the name of God is blasphemed amongst the nations: so the lives of God's true servants are the sweet odour of Christ in every place, and not only give continual glory to God themselves, by the exercise of all virtues, but also bring many others to glorify Him, by the efficacy of their example.

Conclusion. Keep a great guard upon thyself, that for the future thou mayest never use the holy name of God but with respect and devotion. And as for whatsoever profanation thou hast hitherto been guilty of, repair that guilt, to the best of thy power with penitential tears, and by dedicating the remainder of thy life to procure the greater glory of God's name.

SEPTEMBER 25.

On keeping holy the Lord's Day.

1. Consider that divine precept, Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath Day (Exod. xx. 8); and reflect how just it is, that next to the duties of acknowledging the one true and living God, and paying due respect to His name, we should also set aside one day at least in the week, to be sanctified to Him, and spent in His divine worship. The particular appointment of the seventh day, as the day of God's rest, and the figure of our eternal rest, after the six days' labour of this transitory life, was but a part of the ceremonial law, which is no longer obligatory under the new covenant of Jesus Christ; and therefore the day has been changed into the first day of the week, to honour the Resurrection of the Son of God, by which He put, as it were, the finishing stroke to the work of our redemption and the glorious promulgation of His law, by the coming down of the Holy Ghost. But the precept itself, as to its substance, and as to the obligation of dedicating in a particular manner, a competent portion of our days to the worship of Him, who in all reason might justly claim them all, is unchangeable, indispensable and eternal, and is here enforced with that word, Remember, not found in any of the other commandments, to inculcate the importance of our strict observance of it. The religious observance of these days, according to the ordinance of God and His Church, is the sovereign means to bring Christians, after their short labours here, to their true and everlasting Sabbath.

2. Consider that on the days we are commanded to keep holy, all servile works and profane employments are forbidden to Christians, lest their attention should be taken off from the worship of God; or their application to religious duties interrupted by worldly occupations. But if works, which are otherwise commendable in themselves, and even obligatory at other times, are strictly forbidden in these days, as hindrances to God's worship: how much more so are all such criminal diversions as are lawful at no time, and those works of darkness and sin, which are servile in the worst of senses, because by them men serve the devil, and are far more taken off by them from their application to God, than by any labours whatsoever! But how common are those sinful profanations of our Lord's day! How many seem to have no other intention, in resting from their usual employments, than to dedicate this holy time to vanity, sloth, luxury, or some other criminal passion, without giving any part of it to God? See, my soul, this be never thy practice: but, if thou givest the days of the week to the world, to the business of thy calling, to working for thy temporal livelihood: give God His day, to be employed in His service, in the business of eternity, and in working for thy eternal salvation.

3. Consider that all Christians are obliged on these days to attend the public worship of God in His Church; and in particular to assist at the divine Sacrifice, in which we solemnly celebrate the Death and Passion of the Son of God. Here we are to join with Him, and with His whole family in paying adoration, praise and thanksgiving to the divine Majesty. Here we are to bewail our sins in His sight, and crave mercy for them, through Christ's precious Blood offered to God. Here we are to present through Him our prayers and supplications, both for ourselves and for the whole world, before the throne of grace. We are also on these days to dispose our soul to receive either sacramentally, or at least spiritually, the Body and Blood of Christ; to attend to the Word of God; to read devout books, to meditate on divine truths, and to employ a good part of our time in spiritual exercises. Alas! how very little are these important duties thought of by too many Christians! How many will neither sanctify these days in a proper manner themselves, nor suffer their servants, or others that are about them, to sanctify them? And what a strict account shall they give for all these abuses another day?

Conclusion. Make it thy business, that thou at least, and thy house, may give to God what belongs to God, by duly serving Him on His own day. This diligence shall entitle thee and thine to His blessing: and sanctifying His day, shall be a powerful means to sanctify thyself.

SEPTEMBER 26.

Honour thy Father and thy Mother.

1. Consider that next to the precepts that enforce those duties which we owe to God Himself, follows the commandment of honouring our parents, as well corporal as spiritual, and all such as have from God power over us, whether in Church or State. This, says the Apostle (Eph. vi. 2), is the first commandment with a promise : that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest be long lived upon earth. Nothing could be more agreeable to nature, to reason, and to religion, than this divine precept. And we find by many instances, how much God takes to heart our strict observance of it, and how severely He punishes, even in this life, the transgressors ; as well as by ordering in the old law, such as were notoriously guilty in this kind, to be put to death without mercy ; as by the many dreadful judgments He often inflicts upon them. Christians, what is your comportment to your parents? Is it dutiful or undutiful? Never flatter yourself with the expectation of God's blessing, either in this world or the next, if you are undutiful.

2. Consider what this honour means, which the law of God requires from children to their parents. For it does not merely consist in cringing and ceremony : but it implies sincere love, joined with respect and reverence : ready obedience to their orders, where they do not clash with the holy will and law of God ; and a perpetual disposition to afford, or procure for them, all proper assistance, as well in their corporal, as in their spiritual necessities : insomuch, that our Lord will not allow of any gifts, made to Himself, or His temple, to the prejudice of that honour and support we owe to our parents (Matt. xv. 3–6). Christians, give ear to the admonitions of the Holy Ghost by the wise man (Ecclus. iii.), and learn from him what your duty is to your parents, and what the reward of your compliance with that duty. Honour thy father in word and work, and in all patience, that a blessing may come upon thee from him, and his blessing may remain in the latter end. The father's blessing establishes the houses of the children, but the mother's curse rooteth up the foundation. Son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life ; and if his understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not, when thou art in thy strength—and in justice thou shalt be built up, and in the day of affliction thou shalt be remembered, and thy sins shall melt away as the ice in the fair warm weather. And again, he that honoureth his father shall have joy in his own children ; and in the day of his prayer he shall be heard. He that honoureth his father, shall enjoy a long life. He that feareth the Lord honoureth his parents,

and will serve them as his masters, that brought him into the world.

3. Consider what the duty is of parents with regard to their children : and so in proportion of other superiors with regard to them that are committed to their charge. For their obligation is greater than many apprehend ; and their own eternal welfare, as well as that of their children or subjects, depends upon their discharge of it. It is true, they are not to neglect their temporal well-being, so far as is consistent with the safety of their souls : but they must take much more to heart their everlasting salvation ; and therefore from their childhood, they must give them early knowledge of their Christian duty, and instil into their tender minds the fear and love of God ; they must accustom them to prayer and must teach them how to pray : they must make them sensible of the necessity of breaking their own will, curbing their passions, and denying themselves, if they would be happy either here or hereafter. In a word, they must remove far from them all occasions of sin, and procure them all the help they can, to establish them in Christian piety. How easy it would be for parents to bring up Saints for heaven, if they would be diligent in putting all this in practice ! But alas ! how many rather train up their children for hell, by abandoning them, from their childhood, to their own corrupt inclinations, and inspiring them with the maxims of the world, the flesh, and the devil !

Conclusion. Discharge thyself diligently of thy duty, whether of a child or of a parent, of a subject or of a superior, according to the station in which God has placed thee. Pass not over this matter too slightly in the examination of thy conscience, as too many do, who flatter themselves with a false security, whilst they live and die in the neglect of these duties.

SEPTEMBER 27.

Thou shalt not Kill.

1. Consider that this commandment not only forbids wilful murder, unjust shedding of blood, beating, or doing anything else, that may hasten one's own or any other person's death ; but also all thoughts that have any tendency that way, all desires of the death of any one, whether through malice or envy, or for some temporal convenience or interest ; as also all manner of hatred and rancour of heart to any one living. For it is written (1 John iii. 15), whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer ; and you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Christians, look well to yourselves, and carefully examine the true state of your interior, in this respect. You have perhaps hitherto flattered yourselves, that you have nothing to reproach your con-

science with, on the score of the horrible sin of murder ; but have you never wilfully entertained any hatred, envy, or malice to your neighbours? If you have, know that all this is like murder in the eyes of God. Take heed of living in such malicious dispositions toward any one, lest you be excluded thereby from any share in eternal life, to which murderers have no title.

2. Consider how the Son of God Himself has explained to us the extent of the obligations of this commandment (Matt. v. 21): You have heard, saith He, that it was said to them of old, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (a word expressing contempt), shall be in danger of the council (a higher and more severe tribunal), and whosoever shall say, thou Fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire. By which our Lord would have Christians to understand that this divine law was designed not only to restrain the hand from killing, but also the heart from wilfully entertaining the passion of anger, or the desire of revenge ; and much more from suffering our wrath to break out into words of indignation or contempt, or affronts and injuries, which might rob our neighbour of his honour, or of his peace of mind, or, as too commonly happens, of the grace of God, by provoking him to passion and sin.

3. Consider how the Holy Ghost declares Himself in like manner against the murderous crime of passion and revenge (Ecclus. xxviii.): He that seeketh revenge himself, saith He, shall find vengeance from the Lord, and He will surely keep his sins in remembrance. One man keepeth anger against another, and doth he seek to be healed by God? He hath no mercy on a man like himself, and doth he entreat for his own sins? He that is but flesh nourisheth anger, and with what face doth he ask forgiveness of God? Who shall obtain pardon of his sins? Forgive thy neighbour if he have hurt thee, and then shall thy sins be forgiven to thee when thou prayest. Remember thy last end, and let enmity cease. Remember the fear of God, and be not angry with thy neighbour. Remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook the ignorance of thy neighbour. Refrain from strife, and thou shalt diminish thy sins. Let us imprint these divine lessons deep in our souls, and we shall fulfil this great commandment.

Conclusion. If thou desire to keep thyself from the guilt of murder, banish far from thy soul every thought that has any tendency to malice or revenge. Learn from the doctrine and practice of thy Saviour rather to suffer in thy person, in thy honour, or in thy worldly goods, than by seeking revenge, to endanger the loss of thy soul, by losing thy God and His grace.

SEPTEMBER 28.

On Spiritual Murder.

1. Consider that there is another kind of murder, besides that which destroys the body; murdering the soul, by bringing upon it the death of sin. A crime most heinous in the eyes of God, and most pernicious to the souls of men, and yet most common amongst Christians. Of this kind of murder the devil was the first author; by whose envy death came into the world (Wisd. ii. 24); and who was a murderer from the beginning (John viii. 44), by drawing men into deadly sin. And all they follow him, and are on his side, and even take him for their father, who seek to fulfil his desires, by involving their neighbours in the guilt of sin, which when completed begetteth death (James i. 15). Alas! how common is this kind of murder, and in how many ways is it not daily committed? by enticing others to evil, by word or work, dress or carriage; or by provoking them to it: by engaging them in dangerous diversions and conversations; or, which is the most common of all, by authorising sin, and encouraging and inviting men to commit it, by bad example. And what is all this, but murdering as many souls, as there are persons to whom one has voluntarily given occasion of mortal sin?

2. Consider how grievous a crime this murder of souls must be in the sight of God; since it defeats as much as lies in man, the great business for which God sent His own Son upon earth, the salvation of souls, which He takes so much to heart. It daringly promotes the interest of Satan, that arch-rebel, and sets up his standard against that of Christ: it encourages deluded mortals to follow that enemy of God and man, rather than their Creator and Redeemer; it debauches as many of God's subjects from their allegiance, as it draws souls into sin: it even treads under foot the precious blood of Christ, and makes void His Passion and Death, by causing those souls to perish eternally, for whom Christ died. What a complication is here of high treasons against the divine Majesty! How manifold, and how enormous a guilt! And what can such traitors and murderers expect from God, but the most dreadful judgments, if they do not prevent them by a speedy and serious conversion, and by endeavouring to make the best reparation they are able; especially by reclaiming as many souls as they can from Satan and sin, and reconciling them to God.

3. Consider the grievousness of this evil of spiritual murder, from the mischief it does to man, and the consequences it brings after it, both for time and eternity. The murder of the body is certainly a most heinous sin, and one of the greatest that can be committed between man and man; it even cries to heaven for

vengeance: and yet it reaches only the body, which is the meaner part of man, and which by its condition must otherwise speedily perish; it does not touch the immortal soul; it does not extend to eternity. But spiritual murder kills the soul, by robbing it of the grace of God, which is its true life; it separates the soul from God, and condemns it to eternal separation from Him; it brings upon it a second and everlasting death; it plunges both soul and body into the flames of hell. How loudly then must the blood of so many unhappy souls, which are daily sent to hell by spiritual murder, cry to heaven for vengeance against their murderers!

Conclusion. Look well to thyself, that thou never have any share in this enormous guilt of spiritual murder, by giving occasion to another's sin. For why shouldst thou thus declare war against heaven, thrust thy neighbour's soul into hell, and bring upon thy own head a multiplied damnation, even as many hells as thou hast drawn souls into sin?

SEPTEMBER 29.

On Michaelmas Day.

1. Consider that on this day, the Church of God celebrates the festival of St. Michael, and all the heavenly host of Angels and Archangels, Cherubim and Seraphim, and the rest of the orders of blessed spirits. Wherefore the devotion of this day is, First, to join with these heavenly choirs, in giving praise, glory, and thanksgiving to God, who created the angelic spirits to glorify Him; and who has inspired them with an unspeakable love for us, and has sent them to minister for us, in order to our receiving the inheritance of salvation (Heb. i. 14). 2dly, We ought on this day to congratulate these heavenly citizens and their great leader, St. Michael; these friends of God, and of ours; and to rejoice in their eternal happiness. 3dly, We ought to associate ourselves with them, in order to promote the common cause of our Master; that is, the greater glory of God, and the advancement of His divine service and love; and with them to fight His battles against the devil, and his rebel-angels. Christians, how happy, how glorious is this cause, in which both we and they are engaged! And how advantageous is it not for us to have such auxiliaries in this warfare.

2. Consider what lessons we have to learn from the behaviour of these blessed spirits, from the first moment of their creation, and what we are to imitate in them. They no sooner received their being, but they turned to their Creator, by adoration and love, and dedicated themselves eternally to Him. We are made for the same end as they were; that is, to glorify God; and like

them, we are strictly obliged to turn to our Creator, as soon as we are capable of knowing Him, and to dedicate our whole being to His love and service. But have we done so? Have we not rather, like Lucifer and his associates, turned away from God, at our first coming to the use of reason, and preferred every empty toy before Him? The good Angels are perpetually attentive to God, wheresoever they are, or whatever they are about; their eye and their heart is always upon Him; they are perpetually jealous of His honour, and ever labouring to procure, not their own glory, but the glory of their great King. Do we imitate them? Is the eye of our soul turned towards God in all our employments? Are we always seeking His greater glory? If so, like the Angels, wheresoever we are and whatsoever we are doing, we shall in some measure have heaven with us, even here upon earth.

3. Consider from the gospel of this day (Matt. xvii.), what exercises of virtue are to bring us effectually to the society of the Angels. We must be converted from the corruption of pride, which cast the devil out of heaven, and become as little children, by innocence and humility, or we shall have no share with the good Angels in the kingdom of heaven. There is no room for pride in that blessed society; the devil is king over the children of pride (Job xli. 25). There is no room there for any who wilfully associate themselves with the rebels (that have been cast out from thence), by corrupting others, or suffering themselves to be corrupted and drawn away from their allegiance, by giving or taking scandal against their own souls. The true way to arrive at the happy company of the Angels is, by humility, innocence, and purity. If we would come amongst them, we must "cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh, and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1). For nothing that is defiled shall enter into that blessed city, where they dwell for ever (Rev. xxi. 27).

Conclusion. So honour St. Michael and all the good Angels, as to imitate their fidelty to God, their constant attention to promote His glory, and their constant opposition to all the enterprises of His enemy. The name Michael signifies, who is like God. Let this be your motto in all your spiritual warfare: at all times keep close to God, and He will keep close to you: prefer His honour before all other considerations, and He will speedily crush Satan under your feet; yea, He will enable you to "walk upon the asp, and upon the basilisk, and to tread upon the lion and the dragon" (Ps. xc.), and nothing shall have power to hurt you.

SEPTEMBER 30.

Thou shalt not commit Adultery.

1. Consider, that by this commandment is forbidden, in the first place, the heinous crime of adultery; as not only directly contrary to chastity, but to justice also, in the highest degree; as carrying with it one of the greatest injuries that can be done to one's neighbour; and violating an indefeasible right, confirmed to him by the law of God and of nature; and withal profaning the sanctity of the matrimonial contract, and breaking through the solemn vows of mutual fidelity annexed to it. But though adultery be the only crime here named, it not being necessary to reckon up in particular all the shameful sins of lust, yet it is not the only evil forbidden by this commandment; which, moreover, condemns and prohibits all manner of uncleanness, whether committed by or with married persons or single; and much more all other unnatural sins of lust committed upon one's self, or with any other; as also all abuses of the marriage bed, by any liberties, contrary to the sanctity of it, or to the end of that holy institution. How odious are these impurities in the sight of God and His Holy Angels, before whose eyes they are committed! What dreadful judgments have they not often drawn down from heaven! What black and filthy flames are prepared for the punishment of them in hell! My soul, let us ever fly and abhor all these abominations!

2. Consider, that by this commandment (as explained by our Lord Himself, Matt. v. 27, 28, &c.), are forbidden not only all grosser sins of uncleanness; but also all other kinds of immodesties, which have any tendency towards those greater crimes, even to every wanton glance of the eye, and every impure inclination of the heart. "You have heard," said the Lord, "that it was said to them of old, thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say to you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." If then we would be truly chaste, as the divine law commands us, we must, with holy Job, put a constraint both upon our eyes, and upon our thoughts and imaginations, lest death enter our souls by those windows. "I made a covenant," saith he, "with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin" (Job xxxi. 4), lest as he adds, "God above should have no part in him." How much more does this commandment forbid all loose discourse, unchaste words and songs; which not only demonstrate a corrupt heart in them that take delight in talking of such matters (which St. Paul would not have so much as named amongst Christians! Eph. v. 3); for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. xii. 34), but also spread

the infection amongst their neighbours, to corrupt them by filling their minds and hearts with foul imaginations, and impure affections? How common, and how dreadful is this evil? and how many souls owe their damnation to it! It is too true, that "evil communication corrupts good manners;" and that thousands of Christians lose their innocence, and are made a sacrifice to Satan, by means of lewd discourses, and corrupt conversations.

3. Consider, that if this commandment is designed to lay restraint upon our eyes, upon our thoughts and imagination, upon our wishes and desires, and upon our words and conversation; how much more upon our actions; by condemning and prohibiting carnal liberties, wanton play, indecent touches, immodest embraces, all which violently tend to defile both soul and body with lust! Christians, deceive not yourselves: all these liberties are criminal, and as such are loudly condemned in the Word of God (Gal. v. 19, and Eph. v. 3, 4), as absolutely excluding all that are guilty of them from any inheritance in the kingdom of God.

Conclusion. If you desire to have any share in Christ, and in his eternal inheritance, keep your soul and body pure from the defilements of lust. In order thereto, be exact in observing the rule our Lord has given you (Matt. v. 29, 30), of retrenching all occasions that may expose you to the danger of lust, however agreeable or dear they may be to your natural inclinations, or however necessary they may seem to you. For what can be more dear or necessary than a hand or an eye! and yet we must part with these, rather than lose our souls. Apply this rule to such company or conversation, to such books or entertainments, to such plays or diversions, to such shows or comedies, as are apt to fill your mind with impure thoughts, or otherwise to endanger your chastity; and let neither the example, nor the invitations and persuasions, nor the authority of any one living, prevail upon you to transgress this divine rule; or to fling yourselves into the jaws of this infernal dragon of lust; which in such places and occasions, lies in wait to devour your souls.

OCTOBER 1.

Thou shalt not Steal.

1. Consider, that by this commandment, God forbids all manner of wrong to our neighbour, in his goods, rights, or worldly possessions; whether by open violence, or fraud; by stealing or over-reaching; by cheating in buying or selling, or in any other bargain; by keeping from him what is his, or not giving him his due, or not paying just debts; or by any extortion whatsoever, or usury in the loan of money, or other things; by putting him to

unjust charges ; or by spoiling or damaging what belongs to him. In all these cases there is injustice committed, which is condemned not only in this divine precept, but by the natural and eternal law, written from the beginning in the heart of man, and by that great principle of morality which forbids us to do to any other what we would not have done to us. And yet in how many ways are poor mortals guilty of breaking through this divine and eternal law, for the sake of the wretched mammon of worldly interest, the great god of this world ; and that in spite both of law and gospel, honour and honesty, conscience and religion. And how often do they affect to deceive themselves herein with vain pretexts, intended to cloak their guilt and hide it if possible, not only from others, but also from their own conscience ; that so they may go on without disturbance in the way that leads to death, by persuading themselves that all is right. But God is not to be deceived, who has declared that "the unjust shall never possess His kingdom" (1 Cor. vi. 9). Examine yourselves, Christians, impartially, on justice in your dealings with your neighbours ; for there is nothing more easy than for you to deceive yourselves herein ; the consequences of which would be dreadful to your souls.

2. Consider that every breach of this commandment, by any of these ways of wronging one's neighbour, is followed with the strict obligation of restitution, or repairing to the full the loss or damage he has suffered : without which restitution the crime shall never be forgiven. And how few think of this? Alas ! how many of these restitutions will be to be made when time shall be no more, and when that which has been neglected on earth shall be exacted in hell. Sinners, what a load have you laid upon your shoulders by your injustices? And how is it possible you should think so little of discharging it ! Do not be too easy in persuading yourselves you have it not in your power to make restitution ; you cannot deceive the all-seeing eye of Him, who clearly discerns how much you might do, if you would but retrench superfluities in your expenses ; and would truly take to heart this necessary duty of satisfying justice in the first place, and would use all possible industry and labour for that end.

3. Consider that though injustice in general be hateful in the sight of God, there are some branches of it in particular which more loudly cry to heaven for vengeance ; more especially such as tend to oppress the poor by usury or extortion, or by making a handle of their necessity to raise to them the price of the things they want, or by defrauding them of their wages or hire ; or otherwise taking, or keeping from them that which belongs to them. How heinous are these sins in the eyes of Him who is the Father of the poor! They are like murder in His sight. There is a curse entailed upon all such substance as is gathered together by oppressing His children. And so is there upon all

sacrilegious rapine, by which the Church or Temple of God, or His ministers, are defrauded of what is their due; or by which pious foundations, or donations, are diverted from the use of religion to profane uses. In all such cases God looks upon the wrong as done to Himself, and will certainly revenge it, both here and hereafter. All that gold which is brought into the coffers by robbing either the poor, or the Church, shall not only moulder away itself, but shall consume the rest it shall find there, together with the master of it.

Conclusion. Beware of all injustice, and keep at the greatest distance possible from it, as a mortal enemy both to thy temporal and eternal welfare. Take heed lest the love of that idol mammon should at any time impose upon thee in this regard; thou art never secure from danger so long as that idol is not cast out of thy heart. For as the wise man assures us (Ecclus. x. 10), "There is not a more wicked thing than to love money, for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale."

OCTOBER 2.

On our Guardian Angels.

1. Consider that this day is set aside by the Church to glorify God, and give Him thanks, through Jesus Christ, for that inestimable benefit of Divine goodness, by which He has appointed His heavenly spirits to attend on us, and to guard us during this pilgrimage of our mortality, till they bring us home to Himself and a happy eternity. Give ear to the Word of God on this subject (Ps. xc. 10-12), "There shall no evil come to thee: nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling. For He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways: in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." (Matt. xviii. 10), "Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say to you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven." (Heb. i. 14), "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" (Ex. xxiii. 20). "Behold I will send my Angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into that place that I have prepared. Take notice of him, and hear his voice." Yes, Christians, let us attend to these heavenly guardians, who are ever inviting us to the love and service of God, and inspiring us with pious thoughts to this effect; and with their assistance we shall defeat all our enemies, and make our way safely to our eternal country, in spite of the opposition of hell—according to that of Ex. xxiii. 22: "If thou wilt hear his voice and do all that I speak, I will be an enemy to thine enemies, and I will afflict them that afflict thee;

and the Angel shall go before thee, and shall bring thee to the promised land, the figure of the heavenly Canaan."

2. Consider with St. Bernard (writing on those words—He hath given His angels charge over thee) the wonders of God's bounty and love for us, expressed in this commission to His angels. "For who is it that has given this charge? To whom? Of whom? And what is the charge He has given? Let us think well of this grand commission: let us lay it up diligently in our memory. Who has given this charge? Whose angels are they? Whose will do they obey? He has given His Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; nor do they hesitate to bear thee up in their hands. The Sovereign Majesty has given a charge to angels, yea, to His own angels He has given a charge; to these sublime spirits, so happy, so near to Himself and His own domestics, He has given charge of thee. And who art thou? What is man that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou makest any account of him? As if man were not rottenness, and the son of man a worm. And what is this commission He has given His angels concerning thee? Even to be thy guardians. O wonderful condescension! O truly great affection of charity!

3. Consider with the same saint, "what reverence, what devotion, what confidence this saying that God has given His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways, ought to inspire thee with. Reverence for their presence, devotion for their benevolence, confidence for their guardianship. Walk cautiously, as having the angels always in thy company; who according to their commission, are with thee in all thy ways. In every place, in every corner, have respect to thy angel. Never dare to do that in his presence which thou wouldst not dare to do before me. In God, then, my brethren, let us affectionately love His angels that are to be one day joint-heirs with us, but in the meantime are appointed by our Father, and set over us as tutors and governors. What have we to fear under such guardians as these; they can neither be overcome nor deceived, who keep us in all our ways; much less can they deceive us. They are faithful, they are wise, they are powerful; what are we afraid of? let us only follow them, let us keep close to them, and we shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven."

Conclusion. Follow in practice these prescriptions of this great saint; and, as he adds in the same discourse, when at any time we perceive a temptation arising, or are threatened with any grievous tribulation, let us call upon these heavenly keepers—our guides, our helpers, in due time, in distress—and we shall experience assistance from them superior to all the powers of earth and hell.

OCTOBER 3.

Thou shalt not bear false Witness against thy Neighbour.

1. Consider that by this commandment is forbidden not only false testimony given in court, or before a magistrate, against any one, which is usually accompanied with another greater crime, that of perjury, or false swearing; if not with that of robbery or murder, when the false witness is the occasion of the loss of any one's goods or life; but also all manner of private slanders and lies; and all other ways of injuring one's neighbour by words, either in his character and good name by backbiting and detraction; or, in his honour, by reproaches and affronts; or by taking away his peace of mind by scoffs and derision; or by robbing him of his friends by whispering and tale-bearing; or by promoting misunderstanding and quarrels between him and his neighbours. An evil so odious in the sight of God, that the wise man assures us (Prov. vi. 16), that His soul detests it. All these crimes are condemned by this commandment, and by the eternal and natural law written in the heart of man; all of them are directly opposed both to charity and justice, and to that rule not to do by others what we would not have them to do by us. They all bring with them a strict obligation, even under pain of damnation (if the injuries have been considerable), of making restitution or satisfaction; and yet how seldom is this put in practice! How common are these injustices of the tongue, and how dreadful are the consequences of them both in time and eternity!

2. Consider more in particular the heinousness of the sin of detraction, which is so common in the world, and which makes so great a part of the conversation of worldlings; and yet at every blow, says St. Francis de Sales, it gives three mortal wounds—first to the soul of the detractor, then to the reputation of the person detracted, and thirdly, to the consciences of the hearers, by drawing as many of them into sin as are delighted with hearing the detraction; and much more if they encourage it and contribute to propagate it by publishing it to others. The detractor himself is like a thief who takes away his neighbour's character or good name; he is worse than a thief, inasmuch as a person's character or good name is more valuable to him than his worldly substance, which also he is in danger of losing when he loses his character. Now, as in matters of theft, it is commonly said, the receiver is as bad as the thief; so, in matters of detraction, he who willingly hears the detractor, whilst he is robbing his neighbour of his reputation, is like the receiver, and partakes in the guilt of the robbery. And are Christians aware of this? Do they examine their conscience upon this head? And yet their souls are at stake. How few detractors or tale-bearers

would there be if men were once made sensible that their unjust and uncharitable discourses were disagreeable to their hearers!

3. Consider that the sin of detraction may be committed and consequently the obligation of repairing one's neighbour's good name be incurred not only by publishing slanders against his reputation, but also by charging him upon hearsay, or upon one's own suspicions, or rash judgments, with things if not false, at least doubtful and uncertain; or by magnifying the guilt, and imputing to malice what might be no more than frailty or surprise; or by censuring his intentions in his good works; or even by publishing, without necessity, his real crimes or defects when his character is thereby grievously hurt. Because, in all these cases one not only sins against charity, which obliges us to love our neighbours as ourselves, but also against justice, by violating the right our neighbour has, that his good name should be preserved, as long as he has not forfeited it by any public crime. Christians, do but guide yourselves by that golden rule of doing as you would be done by, and you will avoid these sins which send so many souls to hell.

Conclusion. Examine yourselves well upon the sins against this commandment, that you may not be imposed upon by the too common practice of them that live and die, with little or no remorse, under the guilt of the daily breach of this divine law. Remember that custom and example will be no excuse for you if you walk along with the crowd in the broad road that leads to destruction.

OCTOBER 4.

On rash Judgment.

1. Consider that the eighth commandment is also violated by the sin of rash judgment, which robs one's neighbour of his esteem and reputation; if not with regard to others, by publishing the suspicions we have conceived, or the judgment we make to his disadvantage, at least within our own breast, by despising and condemning him there. How much is this crime (when fully voluntary and deliberate) condemned by the Word of God! How contrary it is to Christian charity! "Judge not," saith our Lord (Luke vi. 37), "and you shall not be judged: condemn not, and you shall not be condemned." "Why dost thou judge thy brother," saith St. Paul (Rom. xiv. 10), "or why dost thou despise thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and every one of us shall render account to God for himself. Let us not therefore judge one another any more." And again (1 Cor. iv. 4, 5), "He that judgeth is the Lord: therefore judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the

counsels of the heart." And again (Rom. xiv. 4), "Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? It is to his own master he must stand or fall." "He that detracteth his brother," saith St. James (ch. iv. 11, &c.), "or he that judgeth his brother, detracteth the law, and judgeth the law. There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to destroy and to deliver; but who art thou that judgest thy neighbour?" Let us always attend to these divine admonitions, and fly rash judgment like death!

2. Consider the injury done by rash judgment, first to God Himself, to whom all judgment belongs; by usurping His authority, in judging and condemning others without His licence; and even presuming to claim His prerogative of diving into the intentions and secrets of hearts. Then the wrong that is done to one's neighbour, by passing sentence upon him unheard, and without sufficient knowledge of his guilt (which way of proceeding would be highly unjust in any judge or court whatsoever), and this without any authority over him, or observing any order or justice. Moreover, rash judgment, when fully voluntary, is highly criminal on account of its opposition to those two most essential virtues of a Christian, charity and humility. For, rashly censuring and condemning one's neighbour must needs destroy charity; since the property of charity is to think no evil (1 Cor. xiii. 5). And how can it be otherwise, for charity is love; and love, so far from rashly imputing imaginary crimes to the beloved, is ever willing to overlook even real defects when duty does not oblige us to correct them. And as to humility, nothing can be more opposite to it, than despising and undervaluing one's neighbour, and secretly preferring one's self before him: now this is commonly one of the chief ingredients in rash judgment.

3. Consider that in order to overcome the vicious habit of judging rashly of one's neighbour, one must search out the root of this evil, in order to cut it up. Rash judgment, in many persons springs from pride, and from their having too good an opinion of themselves; which makes them ever ready to believe the worst of others and to censure them, in order to exalt themselves. In others the root of rash judgment is the ill-will, hatred, or envy, they bear to their neighbour, which inclines them to put always the worst construction on what they say or do, and to condemn their intentions, even in their best actions. Others again, because they are evil themselves, judge ill of their neighbours. Others, in fine, from the presumption they have of their own wit, talents, and experience, arrogate to themselves a privilege of passing judgment upon every one, and yet proudly imagine they are out of the danger of rashness or injustice in so doing; such is the confidence they have in their own clear-sightedness, though alas! it often pretends to discover the mote in another's eye, and sees not the beam in its own. The general

remedy for all rash judgment, from whatsoever source it proceeds, is to have our eye always upon ourselves and upon our own faults, and to turn it away from our neighbours. To endeavour also to be sensible how great an evil it is to judge and condemn our neighbours, and how pernicious it is to our own souls; to make frequent acts of detestation of it; and to pray continually to our Lord to be delivered from it.

Conclusion. Guard against all manner of rash judgment, as being hateful to God, injurious to your neighbour, and destructive of the salvation of your own soul. The study and practice of charity and humility is the sovereign means to get the victory over this pernicious evil.

OCTOBER 5.

On avoiding all manner of Lies.

1. Consider in what manner the vice of lying is condemned in the Word of God. Our Saviour tells us (John viii. 44), that the devil is a liar, and the father of lies; and (Apocalypse xxi. 6), that all liars shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. And the Holy Ghost assures us by the mouth of the wise man (Prov. vi. 16, 17), that "the Lord hateth the lying tongue;" and (ch. xiv. 22), that "lying lips are a great abomination to the Lord;" and (ch. xiii. 5), that "the just shall hate a lying word;" and (Wisd. i. 11), that "the mouth that lieth killeth the soul;" and (Ecclus. xx. 17), that even "a thief is better than a man that is always lying; but that both of them shall inherit destruction;" and (ver. 26), that "a lie is a foul blot on a man;" and (ver. 26), that "the manners of lying men are without honour," and that "their confusion is with them without ceasing;" besides many other texts against lies and liars. Let us fly and detest this evil, which is thus condemned by the Spirit of God, as hateful to Him, and pernicious to our souls!

2. Consider that the reason why lies are so hateful to God is, because God is essentially Truth, and therefore as all lies are opposed to truth, they are all opposed to God and cannot but offend Him. Every known untruth by reason of this opposition to the God of Truth is essentially evil, and ought not to be committed for any consideration whatsoever. God Himself cannot dispense with anyone, or give him licence to tell a lie, no more than He Himself can lie. Some lies indeed are more heinous than others; either because they more directly strike at revealed truth or tend to degrade God and religion; or because of the injury they do our neighbours, either in soul or body, goods or good name; and all these are mortal sins; but there are no lies

whatsoever, not even such as are told in jest, or such as are officious, or for excuse, but what are sinful, and therefore ought not to be committed, not even for saving the whole world; because evil is not to be committed that good may come of it. Besides, what good can be expected from turning one's back upon truth and sheltering one's self in a lie? Let us rather die than thus offend the God of Truth.

3. Consider that it is a dangerous thing for any Christian to make little of telling a lie, though it were only a lie of vanity, or for an excuse, and without any design to prejudice one's neighbour. But it is still more dangerous to indulge one's self in a habit or custom of telling this kind of lies. It is no small evil wilfully to dishonour the sovereign Truth at any time, and to lead one's neighbour into error by obtruding falsehood upon him for truth; but it is a very great evil to make nothing of entertaining a habit of wilfully offending God by such lies, and this upon a notion that if one can but escape hell, it matters not how much one otherwise offends Him. For how can such a habit as this be consistent with loving God above all things? Or how can there be any security for a soul that treats God in this slighting manner? No! let us not deceive ourselves: God is not mocked. Those who make little of a habit of lies can never be friends of the God of Truth, nor reasonably expect to be eternally with Him.

Conclusion. Never tell a known lie upon any account whatsoever, much less for avoiding a little anger or any other slight occasion. Nothing can justify a lie, not even the saving one's life by it, because it is an offence of God, who ought not to be offended, even to save the world.

OCTOBER 6.

Thou shalt not Covet, &c.

1. Consider that after forbidding the sins and injuries committed by words or actions. God forbids in these two last commandments sins of thought and desire; particularly with relation to avarice and lust: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife:" "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods." These two kinds of irregular desires and inclinations, suggested by the lust of the flesh and the love of the mammon of this world, are like a raging pestilence which has infected the greater part of mankind from the beginning; like another deluge, they even overflow the earth. Money and carnal pleasures are the two great idols set up by Satan to confront the living God. To these, men sacrifice their hearts and affections; the young by the concupiscence of the flesh, the old by the concupiscence of the eyes;

and thus both old and young are for the most part debauched from the love and service of God, and made slaves to sin and victims to hell. Christians, never think yourselves innocent, though you keep your hands from stealing and your bodies from fornication or adultery, if you do not at the same time keep your eyes and your hearts from coveting. Such are you in the sight of God as your affections and desires are; if these are criminal you cannot be innocent.

2. Consider that by this precept, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife," we are recommended to set a guard upon our thoughts, our hearts, our eyes, and upon all other senses; that the fire of concupiscence may not make its way through any of those avenues into our soul, to burn them here with lust, and with the dark flames of hell hereafter. What have we not to apprehend from the depraved inclinations of corrupt nature, if we do not turn away our senses and our imagination from alluring objects, and shut those gates against the first suggestions of evil? How much more are Christians bound to fly such occasions as expose them to more imminent danger of lewd thoughts and desires. And yet, alas! how few are there that are not too fond of dangerous diversions, which are so near akin to the pomps of Satan which we renounced at our baptism!

3. Consider the necessity of restraining the corrupt inclinations of that branch of concupiscence which relates to our neighbour's goods. In order to do this, we must in the first place renounce and detest all unjust desires, and such as in any way tend to withhold from our neighbour, or deprive him of what in justice belongs to him; as also all wishes of his death that we may obtain his possessions; all desires of public or private calamities for one's own particular advantage. But then we must not stop here, we must lay the axe to the root of these evils, which is the love of this mammon of iniquity; this unhappy vice of covetousness, which if it be not cut up and cast out of the heart, will not suffer either justice or grace long to reside there, according to that of the apostle (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10), "They who want to become rich fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition, for covetousness is the root of all evil."

Conclusion. Fight till death, against both these branches of concupiscence as capital enemies of the soul, which, if not guarded against and overcome, are capable of doing us infinitely more harm than all the devils in hell.

OCTOBER 7.

On the Precepts of the Church.

1. Consider that all Christians are under a strict obligation of keeping the commandments of the Church; because the law of God commands us so to do. "Honour thy father and thy mother," is a commandment which obliges us to obey not only our parents, according to the flesh, but also our spiritual parents, the pastors of the Church of Christ. To these, Christ our Lord has said (Luke x. 16), "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." To these He has given "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," with the power of "binding and loosing" (Matt. xvi. 19; xviii. 18). These "He has sent as His father sent Him" (John xx. 21). With these He has promised to abide till the end of the world (Matt. xxviii. 20). These He has made His ministers, the stewards and dispensers of His mysteries and sacraments (1 Cor. iv. 1), and His ambassadors (2 Cor. v. 20). These he has given us for pastors and teachers (Eph. iv. 11, 12, &c.). To these He has given charge of our souls; and therefore the Apostle calls upon us (Heb. xiii.) not only to "Follow their faith" (ver. 7), but also to obey them, and submit ourselves to them (ver. 17). O blessed obedience! It is in vain to pretend to obey our Father in heaven if we refuse to obey our Mother the Church.

2. Consider the excellence of these precepts of the Church, and their admirable tendency to bring us to God; by obliging us to set aside so many of our days for prayer and other religious duties; to humble ourselves and do penance for our sins, by fasting and abstinence; to frequent the Sacraments of the Church. These precepts are not mere human inventions, they have been dictated by the Spirit of God, which always resides in the Church; they are enacted by divine commission and authority. The law of God and of Nature requires that we should dedicate a considerable part of our time to the divine worship; the precepts of the Church point out the particular days we are to set aside for this end. The divine law calls upon us to pay to God the homage of adoration, praise, and sacrifice; the precepts of the Church prescribe for this end the frequenting the great Sacrifice of the Death of Christ, offered to God in the holy mysteries. The law of God obliges us to do penance for our sins; to restrain our passions and lusts; to offer up pure and humble prayer to God, and consequently to fast and abstain as far as shall be necessary to answer these ends; the Church, by her precepts, orders the times for this penitential exercise, lest, if left to ourselves, we should wholly neglect it. The law of Christ ordains the confession of our sins, and worthily receiving Holy

Communion ; the precepts of the Church require, under pain of excommunication, that this divine law should be complied with in such manner as not to defer the confession of our sins beyond the year, nor to neglect receiving the Holy Communion, at least at Easter. See then, my soul, how necessary it is for thee to observe the precepts of the Church, in order to comply with the law and commandments of God.

3. Consider the unhappy state of such Christians as despise these precepts of the Church of Christ. Alas ! they despise in effect both Christ and His Father (Luke x. 16), and will be treated accordingly at His tribunal. The wilful transgression of any one of these ordinances of God's Church, is certainly criminal in the sight of God ; how much more the contempt of them ? And what then must we think of the wretched state of so many souls, who make a practice of transgressing these laws of the Church by breaking through the rules prescribed by her decrees and constitutions with regard to festivals, fasts and abstinences ; or the frequentation of the Sacraments, at the times appointed ? Such undutiful children as these, who live in habitual disobedience to God and His Church, deserve not the name of children, or of Catholic Christians : and without a sincere conversion from these evil ways, must expect undoubtedly to be reckoned amongst heathens and unbelievers.

Conclusion. Observe religiously the laws and ordinances of the Church of God, and see that they be religiously observed by all under your care. If there be necessity at any time for your being dispensed in any of these Church laws, go to your pastors for this dispensation ; but presume not to dispense yourselves. Only the pastors of the Church can dispense in the precepts of the Church.

OCTOBER 8.

On the Vice of Pride.

1. Consider that pride is an inordinate love, or desire of self-excellence ; or a delight and complacency in one's own self by occasion of some real or imaginary excellence which we have, or think we have, either in virtue, grace, or knowledge, or in any other goods, or qualities, whether external or internal, considered merely as the means to make us excel, and as such puffing us up with self-esteem, and causing us to prefer ourselves before, and to despise, others. This pride is the mother of all vices, but more especially of ambition, presumption, and vainglory ; from which it differs only in this, that ambition aims at excelling in honour and dignity, and in being set above others ; presumption seeks to excel in great achievements, attempted in confidence of one's own strength ; vainglory pretends to excellence in glory, that is,

in being known, praised, and esteemed by others; but pride looks chiefly at herself, and sets up her own self-excellence for her idol, which she worships, loves, esteems, and desires above all things, and to which she sacrifices everything. Deliver us, dear Lord, from this enormous evil, the first-born of Satan, and parent both of death and hell.

2. Consider that St. Gregory (L. 23. Mor. c. 4), distinguishes in pride, four ways of being guilty of this worst of vices. Firstly, by attributing to one's self, and not to God, the good things we have from Him, either of nature or grace. Secondly, by ascribing to one's own merits what we have received from God, and not giving Him the whole glory. Thirdly, by imagining ourselves to have graces, talents, or perfections, which we have not, and being puffed up with this imaginary excellence. Fourthly, by highly esteeming and valuing ourselves for the graces or good qualities we really have, and applauding ourselves in such a manner as to affect to have them of ourselves alone, and to despise others, or envy them the like accomplishments. All these, in their nature, are mortal sins when fully consented to, and are of the worst kind: because of all the seven capital vices, pride is acknowledged by divines to be the worst, by reason of its extreme opposition to God, in setting itself up, as it were, in His place, and, Satan-like, lifting its head against Him; and affecting a self-excellence which belongs to God alone. Hence we learn from the Apostle (Rom. i.), the proud have often been delivered up, and abandoned by God to a reprobate sense, and suffered to fall into the most shameful and unnatural lusts, in punishment of their self-conceit. How enormous then must the vice of pride be in the eyes of God, when falling into such abominations as these, is the punishment of it!

3. Consider that pride is a mortal sin not only when one incurs the guilt of any of those four kinds mentioned by St. Gregory, by one's deliberate judgment and will (at least as often as the matter is of moment)—but also when one incurs the guilt of any of them indirectly; or equivalently by taking such complacency in, or carrying one's self in such a manner to others, as if one judged one's self to have, or desired that others should judge one to have any excellency or perfection of one's self, and not from God. As also when our affection or inclination to our own excellence, or the conceit we have of it, is joined with great irreverence or injury to God, or considerable contempt of our neighbour, or detriment to him. Or again, when through the love we have of our own excellence, we withdraw ourselves from the subjection we owe to God and His holy law, or to the authority of superiors established by Him. How common are all these sins! How many ways are poor unhappy mortals guilty of this highest of treasons against the Divine Majesty! And how dreadful are the consequences of this guilt both in time and eternity.

Conclusion. Examine well thy conscience upon this head of pride: for it is a subtle evil which often imposes upon poor mortals; insomuch that they who are the most guilty of it oftentimes will not believe themselves to be proud. Take care not to be deceived by this noonday devil! watch and pray continually against it; spare no pains to cast it out of thy soul. If thou think it has no share in thee, thou deceivest thyself; there cannot be a more evident proof of being proud than to imagine thyself to be out of the reach of this vice.

OCTOBER 9.

On the Malignity of Pride.

1. Consider the malignity of pride, inasmuch as it corrupts the very vitals of the soul, and leaves nothing sound in it. It is a rottenness at the heart which spoils the fairest plants that grow on this infected soil. The fruits of the good works of the proud, are like those that are said to grow on the banks of the lake of Sodom, fair to the eye, but rotten within. Their virtues are blasted, and have nothing but outward appearance; because the root of them is corrupted. God is not with them, truth is not with them, grace is not with them; they have no foundation for any solid good, because they want humility. For God resists the proud, and gives His grace to the humble.

2. Consider the malignity of pride from its filling the soul with all other evils. For this dreadful vice, not content with shutting the gate against grace and all good, and even changing those that should be the most virtuous actions into crimes, opens wide the door to all manner of sin and iniquity, by setting the other passions at work, to serve, by all kinds of extravagance, its unbridled appetite after self-excellence. To gratify this predominant passion, covetousness is employed, to procure, right or wrong, those riches that may furnish the means of excelling; and prodigality in expending them. Anger, hatred, and vengeance are let loose against all who thwart or stand in the way of its lawless pretensions. Inferiors are oppressed, they are treated with contempt and scorn; equals are envied, as rivals in honour; they are judged, condemned, and slandered; superiors are slighted and disobeyed, not to speak of innumerable other mortal evils, quarrels, murders, rebellions, heresies, blasphemies, and what not, which are frequently the productions of pride, besides the abominations of lust, and all its fatal offspring, to which the proud are so often delivered up in punishment of their arrogance. Sweet Jesus, deliver us from these evils, by teaching us to be meek and humble.

3. Consider the malignity of pride is owing chiefly to its opposi-

tion to the glory of God and His divine truth. God is the Being of all beings; all things without Him are nothing; all excellence and glory is His; we have nothing, excepting sin, but what we have from Him; we know nothing but through Him; we can do nothing without Him. To pretend, therefore, to any excellence as our own property, or to any glory as due to us, or to appropriate to ourselves the gifts and graces of God, and to be puffed up with them, and to glory in them as our own, is a sacrilegious robbery of that which belongs to God alone; it is attempting to seat ourselves on His throne; it is claiming a share in His self-excellence, which is no less essential to Him than His self-existence, independence, and infinity. For as none but God can be of Himself, so none but God can excel of Himself. For this reason every proud man is an abomination to the Lord (Prov. xvi. 4), because he pretends to rival Him in glory, and like the arch-rebel Lucifer, to dispute his prerogative, of being alone self-excellent. His pride is a lie, and of the very worst sort of lies, even that which was first framed by the father of lies, in pretending to be like the Most High, and therefore it is most hateful to the eternal truth.

Conclusion. Detest and abhor, and fly with all thy power from this abominable vice which is so hateful to God and so pernicious to all who suffer their souls to be corrupted with it. Give ear to the Scripture (Tob. iv. 14), "Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words, for from it all perdition took its beginning."

OCTOBER 10.

Remedies against Pride.

1. Consider that in order to overcome pride, thou must not only be thoroughly sensible of the malignity of this evil in itself, and of the dreadful consequences of its being suffered to reign in thy soul; but must also be convinced that thou art continually in danger from it; that it is an evil deeply rooted in thy corrupt nature: an obstinate and subtle enemy, that will never cease to wage war against thee all thy life long; and that is so much the more dangerous the less it is apprehended by thee: so that the first and most necessary prescription against pride, is to study well that we may know our corruption in this kind, by help of a frequent review of our interior, and of the secret springs that rule and set our passions to work: that so having rightly discovered the monster that effects to hide itself in the recesses of the soul, we may declare eternal war against it, by perpetually watching, praying, and fighting, and by frequently repeated acts both exterior and interior, of the virtue of humility.

2. Consider that the true knowledge of God, and of ourselves

acquired by daily exercise of meditation and mental prayer, is the sovereign remedy against all manner of pride. For our pretensions to excellence, our groundless imaginations, by which we take ourselves to be something, those fumes of self-conceit which are so apt to fly up, and turn our heads on occasion of any advantage, real or imaginary, which we ascribe to ourselves, are all put to flight, when the light of the knowledge of God enters the soul and shows her, that all that is not God, is a mere nothing. All human greatness, power, and everything created, dwindles away and vanishes when God appears: "Heaven and earth flee away from before His face, and no place is found for them" (Apoc. xx. 11); how much less can poor man glory in His sight? How can earth and ashes be proud in presence of the immense, eternal, infinite Deity?

3. Consider, that the light of God, which by diligence in the exercise of mental prayer flows more and more into the soul, not only serves to humble us in His sight, and to quell our pride by the sense it gives us of His infinite greatness and Majesty, before whom we are but wretched worms and less than nothing, but also helps us to that true knowledge of ourselves, which obliges us to despise ourselves. For here we are made sensible what poor creatures we are; how mean is our extraction; as to the body, from dirt and corruption; as to the soul, from nothing; how early we are infected with sin; how full we are of all kinds of misery, both corporal and spiritual; what perpetual repugnance we have to good, and what violent propensity to evil from our very childhood; how much we are encompassed with darkness, ignorance and error; exposed to innumerable dangers; capable of all that is wicked, and incapable of ourselves of any good; certain of death (although we know not when, nor where, nor how) which will make over these bodies of ours to worms and corruption, and transmit these souls to judgment; and dreadfully uncertain as to the issue of that great trial, and our eternal lot. And shall not all this suffice to cure our pride?

Conclusion. Spare no pains to acquire these two most necessary branches of Christian science, the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of yourselves: they are the foundation of true humility and of all good, and are to be learnt by meditation and prayer.

OCTOBER 11.

Other Prescriptions against Pride.

1. Consider that in order to overcome pride, it will be of service frequently to reflect how vain and empty, fading and perishable those things are which men are apt to be proud of; such as worldly honours, riches, beauty, fine clothes, which give

no real intrinsic worth to the possessors, nor serve to make them one whit the better in the sight of God; but, on the contrary, if they are proud of them, make them much worse; yea, odious and contemptible both to God and man. For every one hates and despises pride in another, how much soever he cherishes it in himself: and such as proudly seek to exalt themselves are generally humbled both by God and man. And as to the gifts of grace, or other talents received from God, it is still more criminal to be proud of them, because the more valuable they are in themselves, the greater is the sacrilege in robbing God of the glory of them, by taking pride in them, as if they were our own and not His. Humility is both the guardian and the best ornament of all other virtues; they quickly degenerate and turn into vices when we begin to be proud of them.

2. Consider that we may also extract an excellent antidote against the poison from the consideration of the deformity of pride. For nothing can be more humbling to the soul than to be made rightly sensible of the extravagant folly, as well as the sacrilegious impiety and presumption she is guilty of; by her arrogance and self-conceit. The consequence of which is, that she is given up by God, to be possessed by the worst of devils; and becomes herself a very devil in His eyes; black, ugly, and odious, like the devil, and condemned to be a victim of hell with him. And can a soul that seriously considers all this, suffer herself to be any longer possessed by pride? Can such an odious monster when brought out of its dark lurking hole, and set before the eyes of the soul, with all the train of woes that attend and follow it, find room any more in her? It is indeed most true with regard to mortal sin in general, and to pride in particular, that the deformity and malignity of the guilt of it in the soul, and the eternal punishment of it hereafter, are most humbling considerations. For surely a soul that is turned away from God by mortal sin and eternally banished from Him, and given up to the worm that never dies, and to the fire that is never extinguished in the dungeons of hell, can have nothing to be proud of! Mortal sin and hell, those two most dreadful of all evils, leave no room for pride.

3. Consider who it is that is king over the children of pride? Whose standard do they join in opposition to the God that made heaven and earth? Alas! they join with Satan their mortal enemy; they follow him against their God, their Maker, their Redeemer, and their Sovereign Good. And what expectation can they have in following him for their king, who is already himself condemned to hell? Alas! no other than endless confusion, perpetual discontent and uneasiness here, and everlasting damnation hereafter. It was joining with the king of pride that entailed all kind of miseries upon the sons of Adam. To remedy these the Son of God came down from heaven, by the mystery of

His incarnation ; and humbled Himself even to the Death of the Cross, to oppose the standard of His humility to the standard of the devil. He calls all men to join His royal standard by learning of Him to be meek and humble of heart, promising to rescue them that follow Him, from the tyranny and slavery of the wicked one, to give peace and rest to their souls here and eternal joys hereafter. And shall we deliberate for a moment which of the two we shall join, the king of pride or the king of humility, the tyrant of hell or the God of heaven? See here, my soul, most urgent motives to renounce thy pride and to embrace humility. The one is suggested by Satan, who is damned for it ; the other is taught by word and example, by the Son of God, who by it has opened heaven for us : the one is the road to hell, the other to heaven.

Conclusion. Renounce the king of pride, with all his pomps, and shake off this heavy yoke, which never suffers the soul to rest ; and, instead of it, take up the sweet yoke of Jesus Christ, by meekness and humility, and thou shalt find refreshment here and heaven hereafter.

OCTOBER 12.

On Vainglory.

1. Consider that vainglory is nearly allied to pride, and has for its object an imaginary excellence in the way of glory, that is, in being known and talked of, praised and esteemed by others. See here, my soul, a dangerous vice, not only with regard to the children of the world, whose thoughts, words, and actions are generally influenced by the love of praise, honour, and esteem, or by the fear of what the world will say or think of them, but even with regard to the children of God, who are daily and hourly exposed to its temptations, in the very best of their actions, and of their being vitiated and corrupted by this plague. This was the vice of the Scribes and Pharisees, who did their works that they might be honoured and esteemed by men ; and therefore their alms, fasting, prayers, and other good works availed them nothing in the sight of God, because vainglory corrupted them all, and at the very time they were esteemed as saints by the world, made them like devils in the eyes of God. Christians, beware of this pernicious evil ; watch and pray continually against it.

2. Consider that vainglory, which is always dangerous, amounts to a mortal sin whenever the affection of the heart is so far set upon human applause, praise, or esteem as to love it as much, or more than God ; or, as St. Thomas of Aquin expresses it, when a person directs his intention in such manner to the glory of man as to make it his last end, to which he refers even works of

virtue, and for the sake of which he does not hesitate to offend God. In like manner it is a mortal sin when a person seeks vainglory by committing mortal sin; for example, by quarrelling or taking revenge to show his courage, to gain the esteem of being a man of honour, or for fear of being blamed or despised by the world. Also when any person, for the sake of maintaining his esteem, or for fear of being thought less skilful or less knowing, refuses to seek or admit of the assistance or counsel of others, and thus exposes himself to the danger of occasioning some considerable detriment, corporal or spiritual, to himself or others. In fine, vainglory is a mortal sin whenever a man glories in the gifts and graces of God, as if they were his own, and as if he had not received them from God. See, my soul, how many ways this love of worldly honour, glory, and praise, which modern worldlings, like the ancient Pagans, take for a virtue, is condemned by sound Christian morality as a capital vice which sends innumerable souls to hell.

3. Consider the malignity of this vice of vainglory, from its being the fruitful parent of a numerous offspring of evils, oftentimes worse than itself. St. Gregory reckons up seven daughters of this unhappy mother. 1. Disobedience, which despises the ordinances of lawful superiors, for the love of one's own worldly honour and esteem. 2. Boasting, that is, vaunting or glorifying one's own talents or performances, and ever loving to be talking of one's self; a vice as odious and ridiculous as it is common in the conversation of the proud and vainglorious. 3. Hypocrisy, or making a show of sanctity, to gain the esteem of men. 4. Contention or strife, that is, wrangling, brawling, and quarrelling, to maintain one's own opinion, right or wrong, or to defend what one has said or done. 5. Obstinacy in adhering to error, rather than acknowledge one's self to have been deceived, or to seem to yield or be overcome. 6. Discord or disagreement of wills and hearts, by occasion of different pretensions and contests for honour and esteem. 7. Invention of novelties in the way of new opinions or innovations, brought in to make one's self a name, or to procure esteem or applause. See, Christians, what a train of evils are produced by vainglory. And what are all heresies and schisms but a compound of these same evils, and consequently the productions of vainglory?

Conclusion. Keep a strict guard against this dangerous enemy of the soul, as it will rob thee of all good, and fill thee with all evil. Daily pray with the royal prophet: "Turn away my eyes, O Lord, that they look not upon vanity;" and as often as in thy words or actions thou findest thyself attacked with the suggestions of this vice, say with the same prophet, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy Name give glory."

OCTOBER 13.

Prescriptions against Vainglory.

1. Consider, in order to cure this unhappy love of vainglory, which is so deeply rooted in our corrupt nature, how little title we have to pretend to honour, praise, or esteem from any one; we, who have so often and so grievously offended the Creator of all, and who, if we were treated according to our deserts, ought rather to be despised by all men, yea, to be detested and abhorred by all God's creatures; for there is something so black, so odious, and abominable in wilful sin, that even the very animals, were they capable of knowing it, would hate and fly from the unhappy wretches that are stained with it. What pretension, then, can such wretched sinners as we, have to honour, praise, and esteem, whilst we are conscious to ourselves of mortal sin? No other surer than the damned in hell. And can there be any room for vainglory there?

2. Consider how truly vain, how empty, how short, how inconstant is all human glory and the praise and esteem of men. It is like a puff of wind which passes in a moment, and makes us not one jot the better; it adds nothing to us in the sight of God, the just and true and eternal Judge of all merit. Give ear to the devout Thomas à Kempis (l. iii. C. 50): "The sentiments of men are often wrong in their judgments—what is a man the better for being reputed greater by man? One deceitful man deceives another, one vain man deceives another; the blind deceives the blind, the weak the weak, whilst he extols him, and in truth doth rather confound him whilst he vainly praises him; for how much each one is in Thy eyes, O Lord, so much he is and no more," saith the humble St. Francis. And again (chap. xiv.): "What is all flesh in Thy sight, O Lord? How can he be puffed up with the vain talk of men, whose heart in truth is subjected to God? He will never suffer himself to be moved by the tongues of them that praise him, who hath established his whole confidence in God. For behold, all they that talk of him are nothing; they shall pass away with the sound of their words: but the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever" (Ps. cxvi.).

3. Consider that this passion for glory, honour, praise, and esteem is not only unreasonable, foolish, and vain, it is unjust too and impious. It is unjust and impious, because it tends to rob God of His glory, and to usurp what belongs to Him alone, inasmuch as it pretends to appropriate to itself the glory of God's gifts, which He has reserved for Himself. "What hast thou," said the Apostle, "that thou hast not received? and if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor iv. 7). It is also pernicious, inasmuch as it robs man of the

reward of his good works, and poisons even the best of them, and exposes him to the danger of being eternally punished for those very works for which he expected an eternal crown. "Take heed," saith our Lord, "that you do not do your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. vi. 1). No; no other reward but that of the Scribes and Pharisees, against whom He pronounces woes, because they did their works to be seen by men, and loved the uppermost seats and salutations and titles (Matt. xxiii.), and justified themselves before men; "but," said he, "God knoweth your hearts; for that which is high to men is an abomination before God" (Luke xvi. 14). It was this love of human glory that chiefly stood in their way and hindered them from submitting to the faith and simplicity of the Gospel; "for how can you believe," said our Lord to them (John v. 44), "who receive glory one from another; and the glory, which is from God alone, you do not seek!" So pernicious it is to the soul to be a slave to vainglory.

Conclusion. For thy part, ever seek the glory of God, by purity of intention, in all thy words and actions, and God will reward thee exceedingly. If what thou art saying or doing be right in His eyes, it matters not what the world thinks or says of thee or of thy performances; but if He disapprove thy conduct, it will be of no service to thee to be esteemed and applauded by the whole world; "for he that has a mind to be praised by men whilst he is dispraised by God, shall not be justified by men when he shall be judged by God, nor rescued by men when he shall be condemned by God" (St. Augustine, Confess. l. x. chap. 36).

OCTOBER 14.

On the Vice of Covetousness.

1. Consider that the vice of covetousness consists in having too great a love, desire, or concern for money or other worldly goods and possessions, so as to set one's heart upon them, to be uneasy and solicitous about them, to covet them eagerly when absent, to take too great complacency in them when present, and to make them the darling of one's affections. The malignity of this vice may easily be discovered from its opposition to God and His worship, and every branch of divine charity, which is so great that, in the language of the Scripture, covetousness is named the serving of idols, and the covetous man is declared to be an idolater (Eph. v. 5, Coloss. iii. 5), because he worships and loves his money more than God; and what is idolatry but worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator? (Rom. i 25). Yes, the covetous man serves mammon, the god of this

world, more than the living God of heaven; for the love of mammon he turns his back upon his Maker, neglects His love and service, and is ever ready to break His heavenly law and commandments, rather than forego worldly interests, to which he sacrifices his soul and his all, and for the sake of which he hardens his heart against the necessities of his neighbours and the cries of the poor. How evidently is here verified that of the wise man! (Ecclus. x. 10). There is not a more wicked thing than to love money, for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale.

2. Consider the malignity of this vice of loving money, from the innumerable evils it daily produces. It is the mother of theft and robbery, of fraud and deceit, of oppression of the poor, of usury and extortion, and of all manner of injustice; it employs innumerable lies and perjuries to support its darling idol. It is the parent of bribery and corruption, and of all the sad consequences this evil produces in the world. It even creeps into the sanctuary, and too often profanes it with manifold abuses and sacrileges. It has often brought forth heresies and schisms too (1 Tim. vi. 10), and with them a deluge of other crimes; it has pillaged and destroyed churches, hospitals, and monasteries, and invaded and carried off the patrimony of the poor. It even betrayed and sold the Son of God Himself. Oh cursed love of money! how long shalt thou thus, like a second deluge, drown the world? When shall thy tyranny have an end? Wilt thou never cease to fill the world with all sorts of crimes, and hell with souls?

3. Consider, that the vice of covetousness, besides this brood of evils which it daily brings forth, produces many other sad effects in the soul of man, even when it does not hurry him into those more scandalous excesses specified above, and when, in the eyes of the world, it appears more innocent. For where a person, though he covets not perhaps the goods of his neighbour, yet sets his affection too much upon riches or worldly possessions, he quickly loses all relish for heavenly things and all true sense of devotion. His heart is filled with the love of the world, and with many cares and solicitudes about the things of the world, which, like thorns, choke up the seed of the Word and the grace of God, and hinder it from bringing forth the fruits of faith, hope, and charity in due time. The love of riches overpowers his love of God and his neighbour; the care of his eternal salvation is no longer his principal concern; he loses that confidence he ought to have in Divine Providence; he neglects religious duties; he does not give alms according to his circumstances; in a word, he is continually in danger of breaking through the law of God, by commission or omission, for the love of money; so dreadful are the consequences of covetousness, even when it pretends to keep itself within the bounds of justice!

Conclusion. Beware of this vice of covetousness, as of one of

the worst enemies of thy soul, so much the more dangerous to thee, as it is apt to impose upon persons with specious pretexts of worldly prudence and of necessity; insomuch that oftentimes they who are the most covetous, and whose heart is set upon worldly mammon, are scarcely sensible of their disease, however grievous and mortal. Take care, my soul, not to deceive thyself nor suffer thyself to be deceived. Examine well the bent of thy thoughts and the affections of thy heart, and thou wilt easily discover where thy treasure is.

OCTOBER 15.

Prescriptions against Covetousness, out of Holy Writ.

1. Consider in what manner the Word of God, in so many places, declares itself against this vice of covetousness. The wise man tells us (Prov. i. 19), that the ways of every covetous man destroy the soul of the possessor, and (Eccles. x. 9) that nothing is more wicked than a covetous man. Isaias (chap. v. 9) pronounces a woe against the covetous, and (chap. xxxiii. 15) promises eternal blessings to them that cast away covetousness. Jeremias threatens the Jews with the worst of evils (chaps. vi. and viii.), because from the least to the greatest they all were given to covetousness. Amos also (ix. 1) and Habacuc (ii. 6, 9) denounce the like judgments and woes from God against the covetous. Our Lord Himself (Mark vii. 22) reckons covetousness amongst those crimes of the heart that defile a man. And St. Paul (Rom. i. 29) gives it a place in that black list of sins of which he pronounces (ver. 32) "that they who do such things are worthy of death," even the second death of a miserable eternity; and, again (1 Cor. vi. 10), he declares that the covetous shall never possess the kingdom of God, and (Eph. v. 5) that they have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ. And shall not the thunder of so many terrible sentences, pronounced by the Spirit of God against covetousness, deter Christians from this unhappy love of money?

2. Consider, from the Word of God, that these riches which men so earnestly covet, are not capable of making them happy or of satisfying the heart. "A covetous man," saith Solomon (Eccles. v. 9), "shall not be satisfied with money, and he that loveth riches shall reap no fruit from them." Daily experience confirms to us that truth, which this wisest of men had learned by his own experience, that the wealth of this world, instead of bringing along with it true content and peace to the soul, is generally attended with nothing but "vanity and vexation of mind" (Eccles. ii. 11). Riches are deceitful (Matt. xiii.), because they promise a happiness which they cannot give; they are thorns that wound the soul, and they expose the possessors to many dreadful

dangers of losing their souls for ever ; because it is hard to possess them and not to abuse them, or put confidence in them, or at least set the heart too much upon them ; witness that terrible sentence (Matt. xix. 24) : "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." Hence our Lord pronounces a woe to the rich (Luke vi. 24), "because they have their consolation here." And the Apostle (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10) warns us against the love of riches, as of all things the most dangerous and pernicious to our souls. Oh that men would be wise, and lay up in their hearts these Scripture truths ! Oh that they would learn to despise these false riches, and seek only for such as are true, which men can never give nor take away ! Oh that they would always seek to be rich in good works, and so to "lay up to themselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth can consume, nor thieves break through and steal !" (Matt. vi. 20).

3. Consider that the Word of God recommends the remembrance of death, and the shortness and uncertainty of human life, as a powerful remedy against covetousness. Alas ! how quickly will death be with us ! And where shall our riches be then ? "I will say to my soul," saith the rich man (Luke xii. 19, 20), "thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be called for, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ?" How true it is, with regard to the worldly rich, that the satisfaction they take, or promise to themselves in their wealth, is at best but a dream, and that when they have slept out their short sleep "they find nothing in their hands" (Ps. lxxv.). No ; "we brought nothing with us into this world, and certainly we can carry nothing away" (1 Tim. vi. 7). Wherefore having food and wherewith to be covered, let us be content. Now these necessaries will never be wanting to such as seek in the first place the kingdom of God and His justice ; we have Christ's own word for it (Matt. vi. 33). Give ear again to the Apostle (Heb. xiii. 5) : "Let your manners be without covetousness, contented with such things as you have ; for He hath said, I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee."

Conclusion. Oppose these divine lessons, against the temptations of covetousness and worldly solicitude. If you are poor by condition, be content with your condition ; you are more like Jesus Christ and His Saints. Take care not to lose by your impatience the opportunity He gives you of merit. If you are rich, take occasion of humbling yourselves, to see the wide distance between your way of living and that of your Saviour. Dread the dangers you are exposed to by your riches, and arm yourselves against them by poverty of spirit and humility. You have no other security for your souls.

OCTOBER 16.

On the Vice of Impurity.

1. Consider that the lust of the flesh, or the inordinate love of the unclean pleasures of the flesh, is another raging plague that has spread itself over the whole earth, and as it once brought down from heaven the waters of the deluge, which drowned the world, and another time fire and brimstone, which consumed whole cities with their inhabitants, so it daily calls down the vengeance of Heaven, executed by visible and invisible judgments upon thousands, cut off before their time, in the midst of their sins, and cast headlong into the bottomless pit. The Scripture has abundantly declared how detestable this vice is in the sight of God, by positively assuring us in many places that such as are guilty of it shall never enter the kingdom of heaven (Rom. i.; 1 Cor. vi.; Gal. v.; Eph. v.; Apoc. xxi. and xxii.), and, in particular, in the account it gives of the cause of the deluge (Gen. vi.), by informing us that the general wickedness of men in this respect was so odious in the sight of their Maker, that He was grieved with it to the heart, and even "repented Him that He had made them" (vers. 5, 6, 7). By which strong figure of speech the Holy Spirit would have us to understand how enormous this vice of impurity is in the eyes of God, seeing that He, who by nature is incapable of grief or repentance or any other passion, was determined by the hatred He bears it to destroy His creatures, whom He had so much favoured and loved.

2. Consider that what makes the vice of lust so odious in the sight of God, is its particular opposition to His purity and sanctity, by its defiling in a shameful manner that temple which He has sanctified for Himself; and this more especially with regard to Christians, whose bodies and souls have been dedicated to Him in baptism, both of which, by yielding to impurity, are shamefully violated and profaned, are brought down to the resemblance of brute beasts, and given up to be the hold of unclean devils. "Know you not that you are the temple of God," saith St. Paul, speaking to all Christians (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17), "and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any man violate the temple of God, him will God destroy." And again (chap. vi. 15), "Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ," and (ver. 19), "The temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God? And you are not your own, for you are bought with a great price; glorify and carry God in your body." Christians, attend to this heavenly doctrine, and see you never more presume to be guilty of so crying a sacrilege, as to profane and defile the temple of the living God, to drive

Him out of His temple and set up filthy idols in His place; see you never bring the devil in thither, and sacrifice your soul to him, for the sake of a base, filthy, carnal satisfaction that can last but for a moment.

3. Consider the dreadful consequences of yielding to the vice of impurity and the slavery to which it reduces the soul. One act presently begets a habit or violent inclination; this drags the poor soul on to new crimes, and by indulging these, a custom is formed, which turns into a second nature, infinitely hard to be overcome, and which, without ceasing, exercises a most cruel tyranny upon the soul. Hence follow all those worst of evils which St. Gregory (l. xxvi. Morl., c. 31.) calls the daughters of luxury or lust, as being the usual effects of a habit of impurity; blindness and hardness of heart, running headlong into the worst of dangers, thoughtlessness and insensibility with regard to the judgments of God and the truths of eternity, inconstancy with regard to everything good, aversion to God and His service, and a perpetual love and seeking of one's self, strong attachment to this world and horror or despair with regard to the world to come. Such is the unhappy offspring of lust, a train of evils not to be matched on this side hell. Sweet Jesus, deliver us both from the mother and the daughters!

Conclusion. Fly from impurity more than death, and from the dangerous company or other occasions that may expose thee to temptations of this kind, more than from a house infected with the plague. Pestilence can only take away the temporal life of the body, but impurity will kill the soul for eternity.

OCTOBER 17.

Prescriptions against Impurity.

1. Consider that the most necessary of all prescriptions and precautions against impurity, is to keep at a distance from the danger and to fly the immediate occasions of it, more especially the company and conversation of such persons as are a temptation to us, as also reading loose or idle books, indulging too much the sensual appetite in eating and drinking, giving too great liberty to the eyes (which are the windows through which the death of lust usually enters the soul), or to roving imaginations and dangerous amusements, and leading an idle and dissipated life. Indulging one's self in all or any of these ways opens the gates of the soul to lust, and "he that loves the danger shall perish in it" (Ecclus. iii. 27). This enemy is ever lying in wait to shoot his fiery darts at our heart; we must, then, be always upon our guard and keep ourselves, as much as possible, out of his reach; we must take alarm at every motion of his and

dread the approach of danger ; we must not play nor dally with him by taking or admitting any freedoms or liberties even of a lesser degree ; he that will venture to play with a wild beast must expect a mortal gripe. If our Lord has assured us (Matt. v. 28) that a wanton glance of the eye is able to bring death to the soul, how much more a wanton touch or embrace !

2. Consider that our corrupt nature is so prone to this evil of impurity, and the allurements and temptations to it are so common and withal so violent, especially in youth, that the flight of the occasions alone will not suffice to gain the victory without frequent conflicts (for whither shall we fly where the flesh and the devil will not follow us ?), and therefore it will be also necessary for us to fight, and consequently to provide ourselves with proper arms for this warfare ; and as we are not strong enough of ourselves to overcome such formidable enemies, we must engage Heaven on our side in order to secure the victory. This infers the necessity, if we would get the better of lust, of diligence in all spiritual exercises, frequent and fervent prayer, frequenting the sacraments, daily reading and meditating on divine truths, having frequent recourse to the precious Blood of Christ, the source of all grace, by constant devotion to His sacred Passion and Death, and earnestly craving the prayers and intercession of the blessed Virgin and all the holy Angels and Saints. More especially, when we find ourselves assaulted with these temptations, we must resolutely resist the first motions of the enemy by turning ourselves immediately to Jesus Christ crucified, calling upon Him with all our power, "Lord, save me, or I perish," hiding ourselves in His wounds, and not ceasing to implore His mercy and grace till the temptation ceases.

3. Consider the kind of arms we must provide for this warfare, lively faith and strong confidence in Jesus Christ, joined with humble diffidence in our own strength (for if we have any dependence on the strength of our own resolutions we shall certainly fall) ; a sense also of the presence of God, and, above all things, the fear and love of God. The fear of His divine judgments that always hang over the heads of wilful sinners, remembrance of the approach of death, consideration of the worm that shall never die, and of the fire that shall never be quenched, prepared for the punishment of lust, are certainly powerful restraints to keep the soul from consenting to a crime which she has reason to apprehend may be followed the next moment by death, judgment, and hell. But the love of God is a still more powerful restraint, because it discovers such charms in His infinite beauty and goodness as make the allurements of lust appear, not only most wretched and contemptible, but also most odious and abominable.

Conclusion. Make use of these prescriptions against this mortal enemy of thy soul. Fly whenever thou art able, for this

is a war in which thou art not allowed to seek occasions of meeting the enemy or of facing him. When thou canst not fly, fight, but with thy eye turned away from the enemy and fixed on Christ crucified. Make good provision for thyself by the help of daily meditation on the fear and love of God, and He will give thee the victory.

OCTOBER 18.

On the Virtue of Chastity.

1. Consider the excellence of the virtue of chastity, which makes us resemble in some measure the Angels in heaven (Matt. xxii. 30), and which entitles us to be special favourites of Jesus Christ, the Lover of purity and Spouse of pure souls, who when He came amongst us would not be born but of the purest of virgins, and ever showed the most particular love to His virgin disciple, St. John (to whom also, on account of his purity, he recommended His Virgin Mother when He was dying on the Cross (John xix. 27), and who in heaven is ever followed by virgins whithersoever He goeth, who sing before the throne, as it were a new canticle, which none of the rest of the blessed can sing (Apoc. xiv. 3, 4). Chastity is the lily of virtues, the bright ornament of the soul, the profession and practice of which by so many thousands, is one of the greatest evidences of the truth and of the excellence of the Christian religion, of the wonderful grace it communicates to its followers, and of the purity and sanctity of the Author of it. My soul, let us ever love and embrace this angelical virtue, which makes its lovers the favourites of Heaven.

2. Consider in what manner this virtue is recommended to Christians by the Apostle (1 Thess. iv. 3, 4, 7). "This is the will of God," saith he, "your sanctification (that is, that you should be pure and holy), that you should abstain from fornication (from all uncleanness), that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel (his body) in sanctification and honour; not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles, that know not God . . . for God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but to holiness," that is, to purity and chastity. Yes, Christians, the virtue of chastity, by the will and law of God and by the sanctity of the Christian calling, is for all, married as well as unmarried. The married must be chaste, not only by keeping their beds undefiled with adultery or any unnatural excess, but also by refraining from every thought, word, or action that is not confined within the limits fixed by the divine law, or that is not referred to any of the holy ends for which God instituted marriage. How necessary is this conjugal chastity! How many thousands are lost in

this state by allowing themselves criminal liberties, and falsely imagining everything to be lawful for them which their unbridled passion suggests! The unmarried must also keep themselves pure and chaste, by constant care absolutely to resist and renounce all carnal pleasures, and all the irregular motions or impressions of lust, either in body or mind.

3. Consider that, in order to procure or maintain this precious virtue of chastity, besides the necessity of fervent prayer (for no one can be continent, except God give it, Wisd. viii. 21), two other virtues are necessary, without which chastity will not be able to stand her ground for any time in the soul, viz., mortification and humility. By mortification the flesh is brought under subjection to the spirit, and by humility the spirit is subjected to God; and thus the whole man becomes regular and orderly, and easily resists the passion of lust. But where the flesh is unmortified it grows headstrong and unruly, and where the spirit is proud it is justly abandoned by God to the slavery of those shameful passions, from which it can never be delivered but by humility.

Conclusion. Labour with all thy power for the acquisition of this precious jewel of purity and chastity. Spare no cost to purchase it: it is worth all thou canst give, and infinitely more. But, remember, it will never stay with thee if thou give entertainment to its mortal enemies, intemperance and pride.

OCTOBER 19.

On the Vice of Anger.

1. Consider that anger, in the sense in which it is numbered amongst the capital sins, is an inordinate desire of revenge, and is a mortal sin as often as the evil it wishes, or the vengeance it desires to take, is considerably contrary either to justice or Christian charity, that is, to the love we owe by the law of Christ even to our greatest enemies. Anger is contrary to justice, whenever the person we are angry with has not deserved the punishment we desire to inflict; or though he has deserved it, if we do not observe the order of justice, but make ourselves both judge and executioner, taking revenge by our own private authority, which is never allowable. Anger is contrary to fraternal charity, when, let the cause be ever so just, we punish the offender, not out of love of justice, but out of hatred or ill-will, or merely to gratify a disorderly passion. In such cases as these, anger or revenge is criminal, because it strikes at one or both of the virtues of justice and charity, and where either of these is grievously wounded there is no soundness in the soul.

2. Consider that anger, passion, and desire of revenge, when deliberately consented to, are opposed to those favourite virtues of Jesus Christ, meekness, humility, mercy, peace, patience, long-suffering, renouncing our own will, bearing the cross, and the like, which are all strongly recommended by His Gospel, and make up the amiable character of His disciples. These are the livery of His servants by which He expects they should be known and distinguished. These we are to learn of Him (Matt. xi. 20). If we do not endeavour seriously to study and practise these lessons, He will not own us for His disciples; if we do not wear His livery, He will not acknowledge us for His servants. But how irreconcilable is this passion of anger, when it reigns in the soul, with every one of these Christian virtues! It directly destroys meekness and, consequently, humility, its companion; for anger generally springs from pride and self-love; it is a stranger to mercy, according to that of Solomon (Prov. xxvii. 4): "Anger hath no mercy;" it is even a short madness that is capable, for the time it lasts, of inflicting the worst of evils or desiring the worst of judgments; it breaks peace both with God and our neighbour, and banishes it from our own souls; it is the mortal enemy of patience and long-suffering, for it will endure nothing, much less will it admit of renouncing our own will or submitting to take up the cross, because these are virtues that strike at its very root and destroy it whenever they meet with it. And wilt thou, my soul, indulge a passion that robs thee at once of all these virtues, and, instead of a servant and a disciple, makes thee an enemy of Jesus Christ?

3. Consider what a train of evils and sins usually accompany or follow this passion of anger; what oaths, curses, and blasphemies; what affronts, reproaches, and injuries; what quarrels, strife, and brawls; yea, sometimes bloodshed and murder; what malice, hatred, and revenge; besides the scandal that is given those we are angry with, robbing them not only of their peace, but also of the grace of God, by provoking them to sin, as one fire is apt to enkindle another. Not to speak of many other sad effects of this vice, which is frequently pernicious to the health of the body as well as that of the soul, and makes them that are slaves to it insupportable both to themselves and to all that have any dealings with them. Let us ever detest this infernal fury, which daily procures so much mischief in the world to the eternal damnation of innumerable souls.

Conclusion. Give ear to the heavenly lessons against anger and revenge so often inculcated in Holy Writ; learn them well, and follow them in practice (Rom. xii. 17, &c.): "Render to no man evil for evil; if it be possible, as much as is in you, have peace with all men. Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place to wrath: for it is written, Revenge is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. But if thy enemy be hungry, give him

to eat," &c. "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Eph. iv. 24, 26); "Put on the new man," &c. "Let not the sun set upon your anger—let all bitterness, and anger, and indignation, and clamour, and blasphemy be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind to one another," &c. (Gal. v. 19, &c.): "The works of the flesh are manifest; enmities, contentions, emulations, wrath, quarrels, dissensions," &c. "Of which I foretell you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, long-suffering, mildness," &c. How happy are those souls in whom the Spirit of God produces these fruits! But how miserable are they in whom the opposite spirit brings forth those other dead works of the flesh, the end of which is the second death!

OCTOBER 20.

Remedies against the Vice of Anger.

1. Consider, that in order to subdue the passion of anger and keep it within the bounds fixed by the divine law, we must watch, pray, and fight against it. But to be quite in earnest in this warfare, we must, in the first place, be thoroughly convinced how dangerous an enemy we have to deal with, that our all is at stake, and that if we suffer this tyrant to hold dominion in our souls, neither the gift of tongues, nor prophecy, nor knowledge, nor faith, though strong enough to move mountains or to raise the dead to life, nor giving our whole substance to the poor, nor our bodies to the flames, will ever bring us to Jesus Christ; because so long as we refuse to take His yoke upon us, by denying ourselves, and learning of Him to be meek and humble of heart, we are none of His, for we have not His Spirit. And therefore He will declare to us, "I know you not: depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity." O ye slaves to anger and revenge, have you ever well considered this? How is it possible that so many thousands who pretend to believe the Gospel and expect to be saved by it, should be so indifferent about subduing this mortal enemy to the Spirit of the Gospel and to the salvation of their souls!

2. Consider more in particular those three prescriptions against this passion, viz., watching, praying, and fighting. First, we must watch the motions of this enemy, whose attacks are most dangerous when they are sudden and unforeseen; and therefore we must forecast, for example, in the morning the occasions in which we may likely meet with provocations or temptations, that so we may either decline them, or at least prepare and arm ourselves against them. Secondly, we must pray with all the

fervour and earnestness of our soul for the victory which God alone can give; and we must pray with humble distrust in ourselves and entire confidence in God, through the merits of the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the great Pattern of meekness, patience, and humility. Thirdly, we must fight, by resisting without delay the first assault of the enemy, by calling in all the powers of the soul to still the storm that begins to arise, by running to the embrace of the Cross, by turning away from the temptation and going out of the company, or at least by keeping silence till the commotion is over, or answering nothing but with sweetness and meekness.

3. Consider, that in order to overcome this passion, we must also learn to despise and humble ourselves; for anger usually proceeds from an unhappy pride, which makes us unwilling to be thwarted or contradicted or opposed by any one, and therefore makes us swell with indignation and fly at them that oppose us, and seek to revenge every little slight we receive, either in word or deed. Alas! if we did but know ourselves and what poor wretches we are, and what we have deserved by our sins, there would be no room left for being angry with any person for either slighting or offending us, who, by having so often and so grievously offended our Creator, have justly deserved that all His creatures should rise up against us and revenge His cause upon us, and that they should both despise and abhor us.

Conclusion. Make use of these remedies against this unhappy passion, and never make any truce with it till thou hast brought it under, otherwise it will fill thee with sin and will never suffer either peace or grace to abide in thy soul.

OCTOBER 21.

On the Vice of Intemperance.

1. Consider that another capital ememy of the soul is the vice of intemperance, that is, of immoderation or excess in eating or drinking, which is a mortal sin, as often as it exposes a person to the danger of considerable prejudice, either in his soul or body, health or reason, or when it shortens his days, as frequently happens, like a slow poison, though the effects of it are not immediately perceived; and in general when, for the sake of the pleasure in eating or drinking, a person does not scruple to transgress the commandments of God or the Church, or otherwise sets his affections so much upon gratifying his sensual appetite as to make this the study and business of his life, like those of whom the Apostle says (Phil. iii.) that they make a God of their belly, and of whom he pronounces with tears that they are enemies of the Cross of Christ, and that their end is destruction. How true

it is that the vice of intemperance is absolutely irreconcilable with the spirit of Christianity, and with that penitential and mortified life which is enjoined by the Gospel as the narrow way that leads to everlasting life!

2. Consider the innumerable evils in every kind that are the daily consequence of sins of intemperance. How they change men into brutes, rob them of their reason, destroy their health, bring upon them a variety of diseases, shorten their lives, consume their substance, disturb the peace of their families, withdraw from their wives and children their necessary subsistence, give scandal and bad example to their neighbours, foment their passions and lusts, enslave them to sensual inclinations, make them unfit for prayer and other spiritual exercises, and dull and insensible to the things of God; in a word, how they shut the gate against the grace of God and all that is good, and open it to all that is evil. The consequence of which is, that these sins when indulged and once come to a habit, are most difficult to be cured, and too often, not to say generally, follow men to their graves and plunge their impenitent souls into those flames where, with the rich glutton (Luke xvi.), they shall hunger and thirst for all eternity and never obtain the least refreshment.

3. Consider in what manner the Holy Ghost declares against the vice of intemperance in the Word of God. "Who hath woe?" saith Solomon (Prov. xxiii. 29, 30), "Whose father hath woe? Who hath contentions? Who falls into pits? Who hath wounds without cause," &c. "Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups" (Ecclus. xix. 2). "Wine and women make wise men fall away," &c. (Isaias v. 22). "Woe to you that are mighty to drink wine, and stout men at drunkenness" (St. Luke xxi. 34). "Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day come upon you suddenly" (Rom. xxiii. 12, 13). "Let us cast off the works of darkness," &c. "Walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness," &c. (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10). "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers—nor drunkards," &c., "shall possess the kingdom of God" (Gal. v. 19, &c.). "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness—drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God." See, gluttons and drunkards, enemies of the Cross of Christ, where your portion is likely to be, since you have no share in the kingdom of God.

Conclusion. Meditate well upon these Scripture truths and dreadful woes pronounced against intemperance, and never be so foolish and mad as to sell thy birthright in God's eternal kingdom, with all the joys of His heavenly banquet, for so mean, so unworthy a thing as gratifying for a moment thy sensual appetite.

OCTOBER 22.

Prescriptions against Intemperance.

1. Consider that in order to overcome the vice of intemperance, one of the first and most necessary prescriptions is to fly the occasions of it, and to keep as much as possible at a distance from the danger which is always at hand, and ought always to be apprehended in such places and companies where excess is promoted and encouraged by common practice and example. He who has already experienced his own weakness by falling into sin on such occasions, should not venture there any more. The burned child ought to dread the fire. Much less should he who has unhappily contracted a habit of intemperance, expose himself to such places or companies, whatever the consequence of his refusal may be; he will never get the better of that pernicious habit, so long as he frequents such places and such company. Let no man deceive himself with pretexts of civility or necessity; his soul is at stake; eternity is at stake. Let him not risk his all for fear of displeasing drunken companions! The plague is amongst them, let him fly far away from the infection. The devil is amongst them, there is death in their cups, a mortal poison that reaches even to the soul. Hell is following them close at the heels, let him keep off from them, lest he be involved in their destruction.

2. Consider that the arms to be employed against the vice of intemperance are particularly prayer and mortification. Fervent prayer frequently repeated, draws down the powerful assistance of God's grace, without which this evil is not to be overcome; and mortification disarms the enemy by restraining the sensual appetite and bringing it into due order and subjection. Every Christian ought to aim at leading a mortified life, as becomes the disciple of a crucified God; he must endeavour to walk in the narrow way by self-denial, if he expects to arrive at true life, and would be acknowledged by his Lord and Master for one of His. How much more is every sinner, if he hopes to secure to himself the remission of his sins by being a penitent indeed, obliged to expiate them by fasting and other penitential exercises! Now putting in practice mortification and penance, which is so universal a duty, will effectually deliver us from the tyranny of intemperance and even cut off the approaches of this enemy. Let us, then, embrace this happy means of gaining a complete victory over this mortal evil and its wretched train of sins!

3. Consider that the sovereign means for subduing intemperance, and indeed all other vices, is a daily application of the soul to the study of true wisdom, by the exercise of recollection and mental prayer, and the contemplation of heavenly truths.

This helps the soul to another kind of appetite, which will grow upon her, for the things of God ; and give her a loathing and disgust for all sensual and carnal satisfactions. The relish of truth, the sweet savour of the heavenly manna, found in the conversation with God in our interior ; the consideration and meditation on His eternal feast, where He shall fill His guests with never-failing plenty and make them drink of the torrent of His pleasure, at the very head of the Fountain of life, is sufficiently abundant to wean the soul that accustoms herself to this kind of diet from all sensual affections, and to give her an effectual and eternal abhorrence for those husks of swine that keep earthly-minded Christians both from the table and the kingdom of their Heavenly Father.

Conclusion. Follow these prescriptions, if thou wouldst effectually be preserved from or cured of this mortal disease of intemperance. Even in thy ordinary meals let not sensuality hurry thee away to indulge thyself in eating and drinking, merely for the pleasure of it ; but take that necessary support of nature with a pure intention, in obedience to the will of God, as a medicine for preserving thy health, and season it with the remembrance of the gall and vinegar of thy Saviour.

OCTOBER 23.

On the Vice of Envy.

1. Consider that envy is a repining, or an uneasiness of mind at another's good, which the envious man conceives to be an evil to himself, as lessening or obscuring his glory or the esteem and excellence he aims at. So that envy, though commonly reckoned among the capital sins, because of the many other crimes that spring from it, is indeed a daughter of pride, and, generally speaking, bears her company. "The proud," as St. Augustine takes notice, "through the love they have of excelling, envy them that are their equals, because they come up to them : their inferiors, from apprehension they should become their equals ; and them that are superior to them, because they cannot equal them." This envy, like her mother, is a mortal sin of the spiritual kind, which makes dreadful havoc in the soul ; and yet, too often, is scarcely taken notice of by the unthinking children of the world. Christians, look well into yourselves that this devouring serpent may have no lurking hole in your interior, there to prey upon the vitals of your soul. Watch and pray continually against it.

2. Consider that the malignity of envy proceeds from its direct opposition to charity, the queen of virtues, for charity makes us rejoice in the glory of God and the good of our neighbour, whereas envy grieves at both one and the other. God ought to

be glorified for His gifts and graces, which, with a bountiful hand, He so plentifully bestows upon His creatures. Now the envious man, instead of giving glory to God, is grieved at His goodness, and would, if he could, stop the channel of divine bounty : and can there be a greater perversity? Again, the love we owe to our neighbours requires that we should consider their good as our own, since we are to love them as ourselves, and, consequently, that we should rejoice at their good as at our own ; and thus the good Christian meets with daily occasions of satisfaction and joy in every good thing that befalls his neighbours, because the charity he has for them makes him consider them as his dear friends and brethren in Christ. But envy grieves where charity rejoices, and makes its slaves every day more and more miserable, by giving them fresh sadness and pain as often as they see or hear of any advantage to their neighbours. And is not this a strange perversity, to prefer sadness before joy, and the gnawings and gripings of envy before the sweets of charity? But how true it is that sin can never escape unpunished, since every vice (but more particularly envy) carries with it, even here, its own torment, beside the judgment of hell it shall meet with hereafter! "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right!"

3. Consider the malignity of this vice of envy, from its hideous offspring, that is, from the innumerable crimes it gives birth to. Envy is the parent of hatred and malice. The envious are always prone to judge, censure, and condemn their neighbours, to put the worst construction on all they say or do, and to backbite and slander them. They are generally whisperers and tale-bearers, seeking upon every occasion to set others against those they envy ; they oppose, both by word and action, whatsoever tends to their good, and take a malicious satisfaction in the evil that happens to them. And what mischief is there that such a disposition as this is not capable of? The greatest of crimes have proceeded from envy. It was envy that made Cain murder his brother Abel ; it was envy that made the brethren of Joseph sell him into Egypt ; it was envy that made Saul so often seek the life of David ; in fine, it was through envy the Jews crucified the Son of God.

Conclusion. Detest this monster, and resist with all thy power even the first motions of it. It is a child of the devil, who is continually seeking our ruin, through pure envy, without any manner of advantage to himself. Let us hate and abhor it!

OCTOBER 24.

Remedies against Envy.

1. Consider that, in order to subdue effectually the passion of envy, we must lay the axe to the root, by the serious application of our souls, to extirpate pride and vainglory and that unhappy self-love which gives birth to this passion, and which continually nourishes it; and to plant in its place the true knowledge of ourselves and humility. These two virtues always bring with them light and truth, and easily dispel the darkness and errors which serve as a covert for envy. True knowledge of ourselves and humility, clearly show how little reason we have to be conceited either of ourselves or our own excellence, and how groundless and unjust our pretensions are, either to the favour or esteem of others, or to any preference before them. Now this conviction makes us willing to be overlooked and despised, and to sit down in the lowest place, as most suitable to our deserts, and consequently leaves no room for us to repine at any one's being esteemed or preferred before us. And thus the light of truth, which humility communicates to the soul, effectually banishes from her this vice of envy, which delights in darkness and cannot endure the light. If, then, thou wouldst be out of reach of this hellish monster, learn to be truly humble, for a humble soul can never be envious.

2. Consider that the sovereign remedy against envy is to establish the soul in that perfect union and universal charity which the Son of God requires of us all, as absolutely necessary to our salvation, and as the true test of our being His disciples. This charity directly attacks the monster wheresoever it finds it, and gives no quarter to its offspring. Wheresoever charity reigns, envy, hatred, malice, backbiting, and all the rest of that cursed train, immediately fly away. O blessed charity! which bringest with thee all other virtues, and drivest away all vices, come and take up thy eternal abode in my soul! I know that without thee I am nothing, and that whatsoever other advantages I may possess, if thou art wanting, will avail me nothing. But all good things will come with thee. I will seek thee, then, without ceasing; I will prefer thee before all the treasures of the universe; I will spare no pains to find thee nor cost to purchase thee; I will live and die in thy embrace; and thou shalt deliver me from my vices and passions and bring me to my God: for my God is charity.

3. Consider that envy, like all other vices, is to be overcome by fervent prayer, for without the divine assistance we can do nothing; and by serious consideration and meditation upon the great Christian truths, more especially such as may open the eyes of the soul to see the emptiness and vanity of all earthly and

temporal things, which so suddenly vanish away; and the greatness of things eternal, that so the soul may despise and loathe those lying follies, the love of which nourishes both envy and pride, and set her heart only upon the eternal honours, riches, and pleasures of the kingdom of heaven, where envy has no access, and where that perfect charity reigns which makes the blessed take inexpressible delight in each other's happiness, to the great increase of their own. Thus it ought to be with Christians, since they all aspire to this same heavenly country, the place of everlasting peace and love, and have all manner of ties to oblige them to the strictest union; as they have all the same Father and Mother, God and His Church, are all brethren in Christ, are all redeemed by His Blood and sanctified by His Spirit in baptism, all partake of His Body and Blood, the sacrament of unity and love, and therefore ought to have but one heart and one soul. What a heaven we should have upon earth if it were so with all Christians! There would be no occasion for prescriptions against envy.

Conclusion. Have recourse upon all occasions to these three excellent antidotes, humility, charity, and prayer, and the subtle poison of envy shall have no force against thee. How blind, how unhappy, are they who, through envy, become evil themselves by occasion of another's good, and are so perverse in their choice as to prefer the bitterness of this vice before the pleasure and satisfaction of charity!

OCTOBER 25.

On the Vice of Spiritual Sloth.

1. Consider that spiritual sloth is a most pernicious evil, whether we consider it in a more general sense, as laziness of spirit, or backwardness, negligence, and carelessness with regard to the things of God and Christian virtues; with loathing and repugnance to taking any pains for the acquisition of them; or, as taken by divines, when they number it amongst the seven capital sins, a particular indisposition of the soul to the love of God, opposed to the virtues of godliness, devotion, and prayer; and a loathing, as it were, of divine love in the soul. The former is a more extensive evil, an enemy to all virtues in general and a mother of all other vices by letting them in and nourishing them in the soul. The latter is particularly opposed to the divine virtue of charity, to the glory of God's name and His kingdom in our souls. Therefore when it is considerable in its kind, it is a mortal sin, by reason of its direct opposition to divine love, which it banishes from the soul. And no wonder; for if it be a great crime to oppose the spiritual good of our neighbour, by

envying or resisting the reign of the love of God in his soul, it must be no less criminal to withstand and oppose the coming of the kingdom of God's grace and His love into our own souls.

2. Consider the numberless evils that flow from the vice of spiritual sloth when once it possesses the soul, more especially by sins of omission, such as neglect of prayer and other religious exercises, keeping away from the sacraments, and consequently stopping up the channels of divine grace, and laying her open, unguarded and defenceless, to her enemies. And thus the slothful soul is made a prey to Satan and sin, and lives, in a manner, without God. Hence the daughters of spiritual sloth, according to St. Gregory, are :—1. Despair, or giving up the cause of God and the soul, so as to have neither hope nor concern for one's eternal salvation. 2. Pusillanimity, or cowardice, dreading or flying from the least pains or labour in the service of God. 3. Numbness of soul with regard to the divine precepts. 4. Malice, or aversion to all sanctity and to the professors of it. 5. Rancour, or indignation against such as seek to bring us to God. And lastly. Dissipation of mind, turning away from the things of God, and always running after creatures. From these unhappy fruits you may judge of the tree which produces them, and learn to dread so pernicious a vice.

3. Consider that this vice of sloth is the more dangerous because, like other spiritual sins, it lies deeper in the soul, and is easier overlooked by such as will not take pains to think and examine well the state of their interior. Carnal sins are more easily discovered, because their guilt carries with it greater shame in the eyes of men, which makes it fly in the face of the sinner, and he cannot disguise it ; but spiritual sins are more heinous in the eyes of God, though not much considered by men and often not regarded at all. And thus, as thousands live and die under the mortal guilt of the spiritual vices of pride, envy, hatred, or covetousness, unregarded and unrepented of, so it is to be feared thousands live and die under the guilt of spiritual sloth. For what other judgment can we make of those slothful servants whom the Gospel so loudly condemns? Or what can be said in favour of them who, being sent into this world upon no other business but to learn to love and serve God ; through this unhappy sloth, live and die without so much as once seriously thinking upon it, much less putting it into execution?

Conclusion. Look well to thyself and examine how thy heart stands affected with regard to the glory of God's name, the advancement of His kingdom within thee, and the reign of His love. If this be what thou seekest in the first place, all is well ; but if thou admittest a loathing or repugnance to this, and givest the preference in thy heart to anything else, assure thyself that the demon of spiritual sloth possesess thy soul, and that God has no share in thee.

OCTOBER 26.

On the Remedies against Spiritual Sloth.

1. Consider that the sovereign remedy against spiritual sloth is the daily practice of consideration, particularly by meditating on those moving truths, which either represent to us the infinite goodness of God, His love for us, the passion of His Son, and those innumerable motives we have to love Him and be fervent in His service; or else denounce to us His many judgments, both in time and eternity, upon the obstinate opposers of His grace and the rebels against His love. What heart can be so hardened by sloth as to stand out against such meditations as these when frequently repeated? We have a God to serve and a soul to save. This God is infinitely good in Himself and good to us. He is all goodness, beauty, truth, and all perfection; He is infinitely lovely, and He is our ancient and eternal Lover: His Son came down from heaven for love of us, He employed His whole life in seeking our salvation, He even died for the love of us; we have received and daily do receive many great benefits from Him, His thought is always upon us. And shall not the consideration of all this goodness and love, oblige us to be fervent in the love of Him, and diligent in His service? If we love Him and serve Him as we ought, He will be our protector here, and our reward exceeding great hereafter. If we neglect His love and service, He threatens us with eternal evils; and death, judgment, and hell are always following at our heels. And shall not the remembrance of His promises on the one hand, and of His threats and judgments on the other, effectually rouse us out of our slothful indolence, and spur us on to labour in earnest for securing our eternity?

2. Consider that another remedy against sloth, is to reflect often that the short time of this life is given us by our Maker for nothing else but to labour therein, and to labour for eternity; that we can have no other stock to live on for eternity but what we provide and send before us, by working well during the twelve hours of this short day of our mortal life; that every moment of this time is precious, it is even worth an eternity; because by the good employment of it we may add to our eternal stock, and consequently to our eternal glory; that what we lose of it by sloth is lost for ever, and that the loss is irreparable; that the night will be quickly with us in which no man can work, and therefore we must husband well this short, this precious time, and spend it to the best advantage, labouring by good works to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter i. 10). What a strict account shall one day be demanded of us of the employment of this time! And where shall the slothful hide their heads on that day?

3. Consider, and set often before your eyes, in order to overcome spiritual sloth, the life and death of the Son of God, the great pattern of a Christian, who was never idle, but always employed in doing the will of His Father. How happy is the Christian who endeavours to be always employed in this manner! Read also and meditate often on the lives of the Saints, and excite yourself to fervour in the service of God by their example and by the consideration of their eternal glory. What pains do not the children of this world take, to what danger do they not expose themselves for the sake of a little dross which they must leave behind them to-morrow! And is it not a shame that Christians should not do as much for a happy eternity? Remember also on all occasions that the eye of your Master is upon you; therefore take care to please Him, not only by ever doing something, because such is His will and appointment, but also by labouring to perform all your actions with that perfection which becomes works done for so great a King.

Conclusion. Arm thyself by these and suchlike considerations against the mischief that is otherwise to be apprehended from this pernicious vice of spiritual sloth; and that thou mayest keep thyself further from its approaches, beware of all tepidity or lukewarmness in the service of God. Often reflect upon the sentence that was passed upon the barren fig-tree (Luke xiii.), and fear lest, if thou content thyself with a show of leaves without bearing good fruit, the Lord of the vineyard may order thee also, to be cut down and cast into the fire.

OCTOBER 27.

On the Christian's Warfare.

1. Consider that the life of a good Christian is a perpetual warfare, according to that of holy Job, "the life of man upon earth is a warfare" (Job vii. 1). His time of true, settled, and solid peace is not to come till after many a conflict and many a victory. He must fight his way to heaven against a set of cruel, deceitful, and obstinate enemies, who will never let him alone either in life or death. These are they of whom the Apostle writes (Eph. vi. 11, 12), "Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places;" that is, against the legions of demons who dwell in this air that surrounds us. These wicked spirits mortally hate us, because we are created to fill the places they forfeited by sin; and therefore they never cease to employ a thousand tricks and artifices, a thousand snares

and allurements, to draw us away from God into the pit of sin and damnation. But for our comfort, their power is greatly restrained ; they can employ no force against us, nor do us any real hurt, except through our own free consent by unhappily yielding ourselves to them. And on the other hand, we have far greater strength engaged to fight on our side ; not only of all the host of heaven ever ready to guard and defend us, but even of the King of Heaven Himself, whose battles we are fighting, and who never forsakes His soldiers in the war if they do not first desert Him. And what can the soldiers of Christ desire more ? God is for us ; what matter is it, then, who is against us ? We are sure of victory if we do not fling down our arms and desert to the enemy.

2. Consider that the devil and all his wicked ones, knowing how little they can do against us of themselves, have unhappily engaged the world and the flesh to side with them, as auxiliaries in this warfare. Upon these they depend more than upon all their own troops ; and these, in effect, annoy us more, and commonly do more mischief to our souls, than all those spirits of darkness. By the world we mean poor mortals who have been already deluded by Satan into the broad road of sin and perdition, and who have embraced both in principles and practice the wicked laws, maxims, and customs he has introduced ; and continually propagate them both by word and example. This is that world, the slave of Satan and mortal enemy of the Gospel of Christ, against which He so often pronounces His woes ; this is that Babylon, the city of the devil, that is waging war against the people of God, and seeking to carry them away captives and subject them to its wicked laws. This wicked world is made up of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John ii. 19). This wicked world and all its pomps we renounced at our baptism. Against this capital enemy of our soul we must fight until death.

3. Consider that if the world be a dangerous enemy to a Christian soul, because it requires great courage and strength to go against the current of its maxims and practices, and to despise both its allurements and its censures ; the flesh, on the other hand, is still more difficult to overcome, because it is a domestic enemy, always at hand, even within this very castle of ours, which is continually besieged by the devil and the world ; it is a traitor that holds perpetual correspondence with these enemies, and is ever ready to open the gates of the soul to them. For, by the flesh we mean our own evil inclinations, passions, and lusts which never cease to wage war against the spirit, and which violently incline us to take part with the devil and the world against our God. Hence our Lord, in His Gospel, not only requires that we should renounce all other things in the world, how near or dear soever they may be to us, to follow Him, but more especially inculcates that we must renounce and hate

ourselves in this life, if we desire to be His disciples and to save our souls. This, then, is the chief part of the Christian's warfare; to fight continually against ourselves and to spare no pains to subdue our own flesh, that is, all our corrupt inclinations and passions.

Conclusion. Declare eternal war against these three enemies, and fight manfully against them until death, and thou shalt not fail to receive the crown of life.

OCTOBER 28.

On St. Simon and St. Jude.

1. Consider the wonders of God, in these, and in all the Apostles, whom He raised up as it were from the earth and from the dunghill, and made princes of His people. "The foolish things of the world hath God chosen," saith St. Paul (1 Cor. i. 27, 28, 29), "that He may confound the wise: and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, that no flesh should glory in His sight." The Apostles when they were chosen by Christ were poor and contemptible in the eyes of the world; they were ignorant and illiterate: they had no power, credit, nor interest to recommend them, nor any of those qualities the world is fond of to make them shine in the eyes of men; and yet they are preferred by the wisdom of God before the wise, rich, eloquent, learned, noble, or great ones of this world, as most fit to be His instruments in this great work of the conversion of the world, and best qualified by their simplicity and humility to show forth His glory. Adore here, my soul, the wonderful ways of God, and learn to prefer the things this world despises before all its false grandeur, deceitful appearances, and ostentation of wisdom.

2. Consider the eminent dignity to which the Apostles were raised by our Lord: they were made His disciples, His companions, His familiar friends and confidants; yea, His brethren too (John xx. 17); they were made under Him, the chief priests of the New Testament, the first bishops and pastors of His Church, the prime ministers of His kingdom, the stewards and dispensers of His mysteries, His ambassadors to men, His vicegerents upon earth, the doctors and teachers of the whole world; and after Him, who is the chief Corner-stone, the twelve foundations of His Church (Eph. ii. 20), yea the twelve foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem (Apoc. xxi. 14). Reflect also on the distinguishing graces, and the excellency of power which our Lord conferred upon them, suitable to their great office and

calling; such as the power of consecrating and of offering in sacrifice His sacred Body and Blood, of remitting sins, and of opening or shutting heaven's gates to men, the commission of feeding His flock and of ruling and directing His Church, with the promise of the Holy Ghost to assist them therein, the authority of publishing through the whole world His new law, the law of grace and the covenant of salvation through Him; besides the gift of tongues and prophecy, and other eminent graces of the Holy Ghost, and the power of working miracles, even greater than those of Christ Himself (John xiv. 12). Christians, bless your Saviour on the festivals of the Apostles, for the great things He has done for them, and through them, for His Church in general, and in some degree for every one of us in particular. For as they were under Christ, the Fathers and Founders of the Christian religion, so, from them, and through their ministry, the faith, the word, the sacraments, the graces of Christ, and all spiritual goods and treasures, are brought down to your souls, by the channel of their successors in the Church of Christ.

3. Consider the eminent sanctity of the Apostles, on account of which they have been so highly honoured by all succeeding generations in the Christian Church. They received great graces and they faithfully co-operated with them. At the first call they left all things to follow Christ, and as He bears witness (Luke xx. 28), they remained with Him in His temptations. They were indefatigable in their labours for the propagation of His kingdom and the salvation of souls, their zeal and courage were invincible, their love for Him was stronger than death, they were ready to meet death in every shape for His glory, they even rejoiced that they were esteemed worthy to suffer for His name; in a word, they were perfect in an eminent degree in all virtues. By their preaching and labours, by their doctrine and miracles, by their sufferings and death, they planted the faith and Church of Christ throughout the world; but nothing contributed more to this great work than the sanctity of their lives, by the help of which, as well as by the fervour and efficacy of their prayers, they effectually established virtue, religion, and Christian perfection in every place where they came, upon the ruins of infidelity and vice, and left behind them a succession of Saints as the fruit of their labours, which has been kept up ever since in the true Church of Christ, according to that of their Divine Master (John xv. 16), "I have appointed you that you should go, and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain."

Conclusion. Celebrate with particular devotion, the festivals of the Apostles, as the most eminent amongst the favourites of God, and the fathers of other Saints. Glorify God, who is wonderful in His Saints, for the extraordinary wonders He has wrought in and through them, and for that eternal glory to which He has

raised them. But study also to learn the great lessons they taught, both by word and work, and to aim with all your power at the imitation of their virtues and sanctity.

OCTOBER 29.

On the Christian's Armour.

1. Consider that the life of a Christian upon earth being a perpetual warfare, he is under the necessity of providing himself with proper armour, if he hopes to come off victorious. What this armour should be we may learn from the Apostle (Eph. vi. 13), &c. "Take unto you," saith he, "the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, in all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) by all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit, and in the same watching with all instance." How completely shall that Christian be armed against his enemies, who makes such a provision for himself as is here recommended by the Apostle, of arms both defensive and offensive! Let us descend to each particular.

2. Consider therefore, that the soldier of Christ, in order to be fit to put on his armour and to stand in the battle without being hindered by his earthly garments hanging loosely about him, must first gird up his loins, that is, he must set out with a firm resolution of restraining his passions and lusts and all irregular affections to earthly things, which very much encumber and hinder the Christian in his spiritual conflict, and give the enemy a great hold of him. Now the girdle he must make use of for this end is truth, for "he must be girt about with truth," says the Apostle, that is, with sincerity, uprightness, Christian simplicity and purity of intention in his enterprise, having in view God and his soul, and being resolved to fight until death, and to sacrifice on all occasions his dearest inclinations to the love of God and the salvation of his soul. Thus must he begin, and then proceed to put on the breastplate or coat of mail, of Christian justice, by which is here understood, not one particular virtue, but the collection of them all, which the soldier of Christ must labour to furnish himself with, against the temptations of their opposite vices. He must also have his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. But what is meant by this? The feet of the soul are the affections, by which she moves

towards the things she loves. These in the Christian soldier must be properly shod with the preparation, that is, with the readiness and promptitude of the soul, to direct her steps, not towards the lying vanities of the world, in which there is no peace, but to walk in the way of the Gospel, which alone can ensure us any true peace, either for time or eternity.

3. Consider that after these preparations for the spiritual warfare, the Apostle recommends, as the chief pieces of the Christian's armour, the shield of faith, which has a particular efficacy to extinguish all the fiery darts levelled at us by the wicked one, and the helmet of salvation, that is, divine hope, which protects the soul from being wounded by any of his weapons. Yes, Christians, if you would keep your souls from being pierced with the hellish darts of Satan, you must take care to carry about with you the shield of faith, that is, a strong and lively belief in the great truths of the Gospel, with a sense of the presence of God, and a remembrance of death, judgment, heaven, and hell; and you shall be out of their reach. But, then, you must also provide yourselves with the helmet of hope, by joining absolute distrust in yourselves with entire confidence in God, lest otherwise your head be left naked and exposed to the wounds of the enemy, and there be no soundness in it, which is the case of all who in this kind of warfare build upon themselves, and not upon our Lord.

Conclusion. Spare no pains to procure every part of this heavenly armour, that you may be able to fight the battles of your Lord in such manner as to overcome His and your enemies, and to triumph eternally with Him. Especially take care to secure to yourselves the shield of a lively faith, by means of daily meditation on the truths of eternity.

OCTOBER 30.

On the Christian Conflict.

1. Consider that, in this spiritual warfare, the Christian soldier must be furnished not only with arms of defence, such as breastplate, shield, and helmet, but he must also provide himself with a sword, with which he may attack and beat down the enemy. Now the sword of the Spirit to be employed in the Christian's conflict is, according to the Apostle, the Word of God. The truths of God's heavenly Word, heard from His ministers or read in good books, and received as the seed of life, and laid up in the heart when embraced with a lively faith, and pondered at leisure by deep meditation, serve in a double capacity both to defend us and to annoy the enemy; they are both a shield and a sword. They are a shield, because the continual remembrance of these

great truths baffles and defeats all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil ; none of them have any force against a soul that daily meditates on God's Holy Word, and enters into the true spirit of it. And they are a sword too, which none of them can withstand when drawn against them by a lively faith ; it attacks them whenever it meets them, and never fails of victory ; it beats down their fortifications and forces them out of their entrenchments. Such is the efficacy of daily meditation on divine truths ; it roots out all vices and establishes all virtues.

2. Consider that, in the Christian's conflict, this sword of the Spirit is to be used, according to the Apostle, in such manner as to be accompanied with prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit, and in the same watching with instance. From which words we gather the great importance, yea the absolute necessity, of fervent prayer in our spiritual warfare, and that, not only in the time of more dangerous and obstinate temptations, but, as he says, "at all times and with instance." The want of observing this prescription makes so many shamefully yield in the time of temptation ; and indeed we may say with absolute truth, that no one is ever overcome but for want of prayer, and that neglect of prayer is the original cause of the fall of all that lose God by sin. For, His infinite goodness never forsakes them that do not first forsake Him ; He never withdraws His grace from them that do not first withdraw themselves from His grace ; He is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above our strength, but will assuredly give us the victory, if we always cast ourselves upon Him by fervent and humble prayer.

3. Consider that the Apostle prescribes to the Christian soldier, in order to overcome the enemy, to join watching with prayer, agreeable to the doctrine of our Redeemer, who on many occasions enjoins on His followers perpetual watchfulness, and in particular, the night before His passion, bid His disciples watch and pray lest they should enter into temptation (Matt. xxvi. 41), clearly intimating by these words that our only security against being overcome by temptation is to join watching with prayer, ever remembering that, though our spirit be willing, the flesh is weak. And what makes this watching still more necessary, is the nature of this warfare in which we are engaged against wicked spirits, who are continually laying ambushes for us, and use a thousand deceits to ensnare us, and oftener prevail by tricks and stratagems, or by coming upon us unawares, than by open assault.

Conclusion. Make proper use of the weapons prescribed by the Apostle, and by our Lord Himself, by filling thy mind with the word and the truths of God, and by diligence in watching and praying, and all thy conflicts shall be crowned with victory.

OCTOBER 31.

On the Four Cardinal Virtues.

1. Consider that there are four moral virtues called cardinal, because they are, as it were, hinges upon which the whole life of a Christian must constantly move if he would be good for anything. These are prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, which the wise man tells us (Wisdom viii. 7) are taught by Divine Wisdom, and are such, that men can have nothing more profitable in life. All other moral virtues have a necessary dependence on these four, they fall to the ground without them. Every virtue must be prudent and discreet in all it takes in hand, otherwise it degenerates into vice. Every virtue must be just, by rendering on all occasions what is due to God, ourselves, and our neighbour. Every virtue must be stout and valiant, firm and constant, in adhering to what is right and opposing what is wrong. And every virtue must be sober and temperate, lest it exceed the bounds of moderation prescribed by right reason and religion. But what treasures of virtue do not they possess, who have acquired these four principal ones! These will effectually arm them against all vices.

2. Consider that Christian prudence is a virtue which teaches us what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong, and what ought to be done and what left undone, in all the occurrences of life. It is a virtue that directs all our words and actions, in such manner, as that we neither decline out of the way, nor offend ourselves, nor give occasion to others to offend, but, ever setting before our eyes our great business and last end, make always a proper choice of the means that are to bring us to this great end, and apply them accordingly. It is a virtue that directs all other virtues, combining them by the royal middle way of our Great King, that they may not go aside by excess or defect, either to the right hand or to the left. The offices of this great virtue are, to design and consult and to direct well, the execution of what has been rightly concerted and judged to be proper. In all which, it is helped by the remembrance of things past, by the understanding of things present, by the forecasting of things to come, by reasoning, attention, caution, and circumspection; but all this with dependence on divine grace, and not on one's own industry, and with continual application to our Lord, by frequent and fervent prayer, for light and assistance, without which our prudence will avail us nothing.

3. Consider the offices of the other cardinal virtues, and the excellence of them. Justice renders to every one his due and wrongs no one. It teaches us to restrain every thought, every desire, every act of the will, every judgment, every word, every

action, and every omission too, that any ways tend to injure one's neighbour, or that do not rightly square with that great principle of morality, "Do as thou wouldst be done by." And with regard to God (who has the most undoubted right, by all manner of titles, to our whole being and to all our service), it obliges us, before all things, to dedicate our whole heart and soul to Him by worship and love. Then fortitude arms the soul with invincible courage in her warfare against her spiritual enemies, and gives her strength and constancy to enable her to overcome all fear or dread of any of those evils she may be exposed to in her mortal pilgrimage through doing her duty, and resolution to suffer everything rather than to sin. Lastly, temperance restrains immoderation in eating or drinking, with all other excesses of our passions or lusts, and all that in any way carry us out of the bounds prescribed either by right reason and the law of nature, or by the precepts of God, or by them that have their authority from Him, in the employment or functions of any of our senses, whether exterior or interior. See, my soul, how admirable are all these virtues! There is not a day, there is scarcely an hour of thy life in which thou dost not stand in need of them.

Conclusion. Esteem and desire, love and seek, all these virtues. Spare no pains to acquire them, they are richly worth all thy labour. But ever remember whose gifts they are, and that they must come to thee by fervent prayer. All thy labour without this will be in vain.

NOVEMBER 1.

On the Feast of All Saints.

1. Consider that on this day the Church of God honours with a solemn festival the virtues, the triumph, and the eternal glory of all the Saints and citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. First, in order to give glory, praise, and thanksgiving, on their account, to the God of all the Saints, and His Son Jesus Christ, the Author of all their virtues, their triumphs, and their glory, and to honour the Lord in His Saints. Secondly, to encourage all her children to follow the glorious example of the Saints, and to walk in their blessed footsteps, in hopes of arriving one day at their happy company. Thirdly, to teach them to associate themselves in the meantime to the Saints, by a holy communion with them, and to procure the assistance of their prayers and intercession. How just, how pious, how wholesome it is, to glorify God in His Saints, who are the most excellent of all His works, to honour in them the bright trophies of the blood of Christ, to learn of them the practice of all Christian virtues, especially of divine love, and to be admitted to share in their powerful

prayers, and to a happy communion with them in all that is good! "You are come," says the Apostle (Heb. xii. 22, &c.), speaking to the children of the Church, "to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the Church of the First-born, who are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament." Happy communion indeed! Oh, joyful festivity, in which the Church militant solemnly associates herself with the whole Church triumphant in the worship, praise and love of their common Lord, through Him, the Mediator of them both, and through the great sacrifice of His blood! See then, my soul, what ought to be the devotion of this day.

2. Consider, on occasion of this festival, what encouragement we meet with to dedicate ourselves in good earnest to the holy service of our God, when we reflect on that eternal weight of glory in heaven, with which He rewards the light and momentary labours and sufferings of His servants. All these holy ones, whose Feast we celebrate this day, are entered into the never-ending joys of their Lord, at a very cheap and easy rate. The yoke of His divine servitude, which they bore for the short time of their pilgrimage, was very sweet to them, and their burden was very light. Grace and love made all things easy that they either did or suffered for their beloved. He Himself supported them in such manner as to carry, as it were, both them and their crosses upon His own shoulders. He never left them in life or death till He took them to Himself in His heavenly kingdom, where they shall live and reign for ever with Him. My soul, hast not thou the same God as they had? Hast not thou the same Saviour, Jesus Christ, who has purchased the same kingdom for thee also, with His own most precious blood? Hast not thou the same Sacraments and Sacrifice, and the same helps and means of grace as they had? Is the arm of God shortened? Or is the source of His infinite goodness and mercy dried up or diminished? Why then mayest not thou also aspire to the same glory and happiness? The saints carried about with them heretofore the like flesh and blood as thou now dost; but their correspondence with the mercy and grace of God raised them up from the dunghill of corrupt nature, and made them saints; the like correspondence with divine mercy and grace can do as much for thee also. Why then shouldst thou not endeavour to be a saint?

3. Consider that as it is the love of God which makes saints, so it is this divine love which we particularly honour in the saints. This ought to be the great object of our attention, our devotion, and our imitation, on the festivals of these generous lovers and beloved of God, and more especially on this day, when we celebrate the virtues of them all, under one solemnity.

What strong invitations, what great encouragement have we not here, what pressing calls to sanctify our souls with divine love, when we have set before our eyes all these millions of heavenly lovers whom we honour in this festivity? The Blessed Virgin, the Queen and mother of beautiful love; innumerable legions of angelic spirits, the Cherubim and Seraphim all on fire with love; the patriarchs and prophets, constant and faithful lovers of their God; the Apostles of the Lamb, sent by Him to spread through all the earth the bright flames of love, which He sent down upon them from heaven; the armies of martyrs, all victims of love, who laid down their lives for love; the millions of holy Confessors, and all the spirits of the just made perfect by love, who both in life and death have been always true friends and servants of divine love; and now, for all eternity, shall shine and burn in its beautiful flames; all the virgins, in fine, the spouses of love, whose love for the Lamb was stronger than death, and who now follow Him singing hymns of eternal love wheresoever He goes. Let us draw near to this great fire, to this heavenly company of seraphic lovers, that our frozen hearts may receive some small heat at least from their flames.

Conclusion. Ever love, honour, and imitate the saints of God; but more especially love what God loves in them; that is, the gifts of His divine grace; amongst which the most excellent is love. Thus shalt thou be entitled both to the intercession of the saints at present, and to their happy society hereafter.

NOVEMBER 2.

On the Commemoration of All Souls.

1. Consider that on this day, the Church of God attending to the necessities of great numbers of her children who are departed this life in her faith and communion,—but not without some blemish of sin in their souls, some lesser stains at least, of idle words, or other venial offences, some wood, hay, or stubble in their building, which cannot stand the fire, or some debt to divine justice, on account of former sins not sufficiently expiated by penance,—turns her prayers and sacrifices towards procuring for them from the mercy of God, through the merits of the precious Blood of Jesus Christ her spouse, remission of all their sins, and their speedy admittance into the happy regions of eternal rest, light and peace, in the company of the saints. My soul, how holy and wholesome is the institution of this day of expiation! How full of piety and charity is this apostolical tradition, this religious practice of the Church of God, in all ages, to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins (2 Machab. xxii. 46). Alas, how few depart this life so pure as

to be immediately admitted to that blessed city above, where "nothing defiled can enter in!" (Rev. xvii. 2.) How few are fit to fly up to the embraces of the God of all purity, without some purgation after death! It is then a duty of Christian charity, incumbent on all the children of the Church of Christ, to assist, by their prayers, their brethren who are gone before them, that they may be discharged from their sins, and rest in peace.

2. Consider that this kind of charity is highly pleasing to God; is very beneficial to the souls of the faithful departed, and very wholesome to our own souls. The spiritual works of mercy are of all, the most acceptable to God, the lover of souls. Now this is one of the spiritual works of mercy; it far exceeds all the corporal works of mercy. It tends to feed those souls that are hungry, with the plenty of God's house, to quench their thirst at the fountain of life, to clothe them with immortal glory, to comfort and refresh them under their pains and sufferings, to loose their bands, to deliver them out of their prison, and to help them forward to their eternal home which they so ardently long for. Now all this is most agreeable to the Father of mercies, who has a most tender love for these His children. It is doing these souls of our brethren the greatest charity imaginable, by contributing all in our power to deliver them from their evils, and bring them to their Sovereign Good. And it is at the same time a most excellent means of obtaining mercy for ourselves whilst we show this mercy to them: "for the merciful shall obtain mercy" (Matt. xi. 7). It is making to ourselves friends ——who when we fail, may receive us into everlasting habitations" (Luke xvi. 9).

3. Consider that this charity, which we owe to the souls of the faithful departed, is exercised not only by praying for them, but also by fasting, or other penitential austerities, offered to God in their behalf for the remission of their sins; as also by alms-deeds, performed with the like intention, according to the religious customs of former ages, and the practice of our pious ancestors in their doles at the funerals of the dead. But the most effectual means of all, to purge them from their sins and to bring them to their God, is offering up for them the great Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ; and presenting to God, in their favour, that most sacred Victim, by which was cancelled the handwriting which was against us and atonement was made for our sins. In the old law, the high-priest once a year, on the solemn feast of expiation (Lev. xvi.), carried the blood of victims into the sanctuary to make atonement for the sins of the people. This was but a figure of what was done by our High-Priest, who is gone once for all into the sanctuary of heaven, not with the blood of goats, or of calves, but with His own most sacred Blood shed upon earth for our sins; ceasing not to exhibit the same to His Father, both by Himself in heaven, where He

makes continual intercession for us; and here by His ministers in the Sacred Mysteries. This blood pleads strongly for the remission of sins; this is the source of all mercy and grace; this is plentifully applied to the souls both of the living and the dead by the great Sacrifice of the Altar.

Conclusion. Assist, to the best of thy power, the souls of the faithful departed, both by prayers, alms, and this holy oblation of the blood of Christ. Thy charity for them may stand thee in great stead, when their case shall come to be thy own. But remember withal, that the best thing thou canst do is to work for thyself while thou hast time, and to do full penance for thy sins in this life; that thy soul may not stand in need of these helps hereafter.

NOVEMBER 3.

On the Obligation of Christians to be Saints.

1. Consider how often God has declared in His Word that all His people ought to be saints. "Be ye holy, because I the Lord your God am holy," was what He perpetually inculcated in the Old Testament; and in the New, the Son of God calls upon us all (Matt. v. 48), "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." All Christians are called to be saints (Rom. i. 7); to be holy and without blemish in the sight of God in charity (Eph. i. 4); a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people (1 Pet. ii. 9). Hence, the name of saints is appropriated by St. Paul to all Christians, as if it were the same thing to be a Christian and to be a saint: which shows that, according to the doctrine of the Apostle, all Christians, as such, are at least obliged to endeavour to be saints. This obligation is grounded upon the sanctity of God whom we serve; of the gospel law, under which we live; of the holy institute we profess; of the great Master we follow; of the divine Sacraments and Sacrifice we frequent; and of that sacred dedication and consecration by which God has sanctified our souls for Himself. Let us never forget the many motives we have to be saints!

2. Consider that our being Saints is not merely a matter of counsel or of greater perfection: it is a strict commandment; it is implied in the first and chiefest of God's commandments. For though all are not commanded to work miracles, nor to exercise extraordinary austerities, nor to retire into deserts to spend their whole time in prayer, nor to sell all they have and give it to the poor (for there have been many great saints that have done none of these things); yet all are commanded to love God with their whole heart, with their whole soul, with their whole mind, and with their whole strength. Now this it is that makes saints, and this is of strict obligation to all. Do this, my soul, keep

this commandment, and thou also shalt be a saint; but without this, none of those other things, nor all of them together, can make any one a saint. Christians, reflect on the perfection and sanctity, which is required of you by this great commandment of divine love. To love the Lord our God with our whole heart and all its affections, with our whole soul and all its powers, with our whole mind by directing all our thoughts to Him; and with our whole strength by dedicating to Him all our actions. This is to be saints indeed! Now this our God calls for, and nothing less will satisfy Him; it is the very first of His commandments.

3. Consider, upon how many titles this great God claims our hearts and souls by love and service, and consequently that we should be truly saints; that is, sanctified, and consecrated to Him. 1. We are His children, and therefore ought to bear some resemblance to our Father, by imitation of His sanctity. 2. Our souls are espoused to Him, and aspire to eternal union with Him; now whatsoever is opposed to true sanctity defiles the soul and disqualifies her for that happy union. 3. We are His temples, the temples of God must be ever holy. 4. We are members of Jesus Christ, we are ingrafted in Him, we are to live by His Spirit, which is the Spirit of sanctity. 5. We absolutely belong to God by creation, He gave us our being, and gave it to us for no other end but that we should be saints. 6. The Son of God delivered Himself for us by His Passion and Death, that He might cleanse us from all our sins in His own blood, and make us a kingdom of priests (that is, saints) to God and His Father (Apoc. i. 5, 6). In fine, by our baptismal vows, by our dedication to God at that time, by frequent participation of the Body and Blood of Christ in the divine Sacraments, in consequence of which we ought to abide in Christ, the God of all sanctity, and live by Him; and by innumerable other titles we belong to God; and are strictly obliged to give ourselves without reserve, to serve Him in holiness and justice all the days of our life. And shall not all this convince us of the necessity of labouring in earnest to be saints, which is both the will and the commandment of God?

Conclusion. Begin from this very hour a new and saintly life, by yielding thyself up as a perpetual servant to divine love; and striving henceforward to make daily progress in this heavenly virtue. This is the shortest and surest way to sanctity and perfection.

NOVEMBER. 4

On the Means we all have to become Saints.

1. Consider that if our Lord calls upon us and even commands us all to be saints, He who never commands impossibilities, furnishes us also with the means, which, if we make good use of, will make us saints. Witness those manifold graces and spiritual helps with which He continually favours us. If we duly corresponded with them, we should all be saints. Witness that early knowledge He has given us of His heavenly truths, and those repeated invitations with which He sweetly presses us to turn from our sins and come to Him. If we did but welcome these first divine calls, how quickly would they produce in our souls strong desires of dedicating ourselves in good earnest to divine love! Now, such strong desires as these are the beginning of true wisdom, and the very foundation of all sanctity. For since God desires we should be saints, if we also sincerely desire it, the work will be done. Strong desires will make us earnest in prayer; they will make us diligent and fervent in spiritual exercises. Strong desires will make us labour in earnest; we shall spare no pains in the acquisition of virtue, if our desires are strong indeed. Such desires as these are that "hunger and thirst after justice," recommended by our Lord, which never fail of being filled (Matt. v. 6). Who can complain of wanting the means to become saints, when strong desires may do the work!

2. Consider the many particular helps for sanctity which we meet with everywhere, in the Church of God; which, as they have already made many great saints, in every state and condition of life, are capable of doing as much for us, and will not fail of doing it, if we are not wanting to God and to ourselves by the abuse or neglect of them. Such are the Sacraments, those conduits of divine grace instituted by Jesus Christ on purpose to make us saints. Such, in particular, is that most holy Sacrament, and divine Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, which we have always amongst us, and may daily approach to the very fountain of all sanctity. One good and perfect communion might suffice to make thee a saint. Such, again, is the Word of God, which is so often preached to us, or read by us; the truths of eternity so often set before us; the Gospel of Jesus Christ; the lives of the saints; the great examples of the living servants of God; the mysteries relating to our redemption, which we so often celebrate in the public worship of the Church, in such manner as to make them as it were present to the eyes of our soul; with abundance of other spiritual advantages, which are continually found in the communion of the true Church of Christ. Christians, let us never complain of wanting the means to become saints,

when we have so many powerful graces and helps always at hand! If we are not saints, it must be entirely our own fault. And what an account shall we have one day to give for all these graces and helps, if we do not make good use of them?

3. Consider that in order to be Saints, nothing is required on our part but what God will make sweet and easy to us, "for His yoke is sweet, and His burden is light." We may apply to His commandment of our being saints what is written (Deut. xxx. 11, &c.): "This commandment that I command thee this day is not above thee, not far from thee; nor is it in heaven, that thou shouldst say: Which of us can go up to heaven to bring it to us; nor is it beyond the sea, that thou mayest excuse thyself, and say, Which of us can cross the sea, and bring it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." Yes, Christians, our God is very near us; He is in the very centre of our souls. With Him are all the treasures of grace and sanctity; with Him is the law of love; He is all love; He is a consuming fire, the property of which is to destroy all our vices, and to transform our souls into Himself. He is the inexhaustible Source of all good. We have no need then to go far to find divine love which makes saints, since we have the very source of it within us; it is but turning into our own interior by the diligent practice of recollection and mental prayer, and there we shall quickly meet with our God, and with His love which will make all duties and all labours sweet and easy to us. This is the shortest way to all good, and the most effectual means to make us saints.

Conclusion. Embrace and put in practice all these means of sanctity which divine Providence continually presents thee with. Open the door of thy heart to every grace with which God visits thee, and co-operate with it to the full extent of thy power. Nourish in thy soul a great desire, a perfect hunger and thirst after the love of God and all Christian perfection. Meditate often; read good books; be fervent in prayer, and in frequenting the Sacraments. But particularly aim at a spirit of recollection, continual attention to God in thy interior, and frequent aspirations of love, and thou shalt quickly become a saint.

NOVEMBER 5.

On the Perfection of our Ordinary Actions.

1. Consider the error of many Christians in placing sanctity in such things as indeed are no part of it. Thus, some suppose that in order to be a saint, one must work miracles! Now St. John Baptist was one of the greatest of saints; and yet wrought no miracles (John x. 41). And indeed one single act of humi-

lity or self-denial for love of God, goes further towards making a saint than even raising the dead to life. Others, again, vainly imagine that sanctity consists in having visions, revelations and ecstacies, or in the gifts of prophecy, of tongues, or of an eminent knowledge of the most sublime and divine truths, because they often meet with such things as these in the lives of saints; but none of these things made them saints; and they have been found even in such as were no saints: whilst, on the other hand, many eminent saints have had none of them; neither ought any humble Christian to desire, or seek for such things as these, though every Christian ought to desire and endeavour to be a saint. Nor does sanctity consist in much fasting, in wearing hair-shirts, in taking disciplines, in giving large alms, in reciting long prayers, or in any other extraordinary practices or observances; all which, however good in themselves, have been found in hypocrites, or in such as have been all the while slaves to pride, self-love, and passion. But true sanctity consists in unfeigned charity, both as regards the love of God and of our neighbour: it consists in conformity with the will of God in all things, and adhering close to Him; it consists in being humble of heart, and sincerely despising ourselves; it consists in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross and following Christ. Such as do these things are saints; where any of these are wanting, there is no sanctity.

2. Consider that sanctity does not so much depend upon doing extraordinary actions, as upon doing our ordinary actions extraordinary well. Our life passes away in the daily ordinary actions which take up our time from morning till night; such as our rising, our morning exercise, our daily labours, or the business of our calling, our regular devotions, and spiritual reading, our meals, our conversation, the employment of our thoughts when our hands are at work, our examination of conscience at night, and our evening exercise. Now if all these are done extraordinary well, our whole time will be spent extraordinary well; and nothing more will be required to make us saints. Neither will it cost us more to do them well than to do them ill; on the contrary, the better we perform them, and the more diligent and fervent we are in them, the more easy and delightful they will be to us; and the grace of God and His blessing will go along with all we do. How inexcusable then are we, my soul, if we do not strive to be saints, when we may attain to this happiness even by our daily ordinary actions, provided we perform them with due perfection!

3. Consider that the perfection of our ordinary actions depends upon the purity of intention with which we perform them, on our attention to God in all we do, and on seasoning our labours and employments with frequent aspirations and ejaculations of divine love, and frequent oblations of ourselves and of

all we do to God. "By thy ordinance the day goeth on," saith the royal Prophet (Ps. cxviii. 91), for all things serve thee." Yes, my soul, all things continually serve the Lord, but the rebel angels and the rebellious will of man. Now this rebellious will of ours we bring to serve Him, by beginning the day with an oblation of our whole selves to Him; by directing all our thoughts, words, and actions with a pure intention to His glory; by making His holy will the rule of all we do; by beginning every work with an offering of what we are going to do, together with an offering of our heart to Him; and by often renewing this offering in the midst of our work; by doing all our actions as much as we can in recollection of His presence; and by intermingling acts of divine love with all we do. Thus shall our days be found full days; thus shall they go on by God's ordinance; thus shall they all serve Him.

Conclusion. Take great care to give thy ordinary actions their due perfection, by following these rules. And as to thy daily employment and the business and labours of thy lawful calling, ever consider them as appointed thee by the holy will of God, and ever perform them in compliance with, and in obedience to His heavenly will; thus thou mayest make them all acts of virtue, and even acts of divine love. And if thy daily employment be laborious or otherwise mortifying, or disagreeable to self-love, thou mayest also make them acts of penance, by accepting them, as imposed upon thee by God, for thy sins; offering them up to God in union with the labours and sufferings of Jesus Christ.

NOVEMBER 6.

On the Sanctity of the Christian's Institute.

1. Consider that the Christian religion is in the nature of a religious institute, founded by Jesus Christ our Lord, and taking its name from Him. The Son of God Himself came down from heaven to be the founder of the Christian order. Its origin is heavenly; its rule is heavenly; being God's own Word, and the Gospel of His Son. Its tendency is heavenly; it tends to deliver us from all those evils, both with regard to time and eternity, in which we are unhappily involved by our first parents' transgression; particularly from the death of sin, and from the second death of hell; and to bring us to our Sovereign Good, to perfection and sanctity here, and to our true and eternal life hereafter. The means it furnishes us with for this end are also heavenly; such as the communications of divine grace; the sacred Mysteries and Sacraments of divine institution; the daily conversation with God by prayer, and the communion of the saints, or a happy association with all holy persons in all holy things. The Christian makes

his solemn religious profession at the foot of the altar at his baptism ; there he engages himself by vows to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to lead an innocent and saintly life ; there he receives for his habit the white robe, denoting cleanness of heart and innocence, with a charge to keep it all his lifetime without spot or stain ; there he puts on Jesus Christ by a new birth, in order to a new and spiritual life, that he may know no death. Can anything then be more holy than the sacred institute of the Christian order ; where the Founder, the rule, the exercises, the vows, the habit, and the whole manner of life it requires, are all most heavenly and divine !

2. Consider the blindness and misery of the greater part of Christians, who live in a strange insensibility to the excellence of the Christian religion, the obligations of it, and the sanctity it requires of them, in consequence of the alliance it gives them with the whole blessed Trinity. The dignity of a Christian is indeed very great. He has the honour to be enrolled in the service of the great King. He is made His domestic, His friend, His favourite. But this is not all ; he is even adopted, through Jesus Christ, to be a child of God and an heir of His eternal kingdom : he is engrafted and incorporated with Christ, and made a member of that mystical body, of which the Son of God is the Head ; he is made partaker of His spirit ; of His kingdom and priestly unction ; and in some measure of His divine nature. The grace of Christianity is so great, that the Apostle, writing to the Ephesians, seems to want words to express it. He calls it the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the mystery hidden from eternity in God (Eph. iv. 8, 9), with a great deal more to the like purpose, as well with relation to the exceeding goodness of God, manifested in His calling us without any desert of ours, to so great a grace as this of the Christian religion, as also with regard to the incomprehensible advantage which this grace entitles us to. But may we not too justly apply to the greater part of those who are called to all these advantages, that of the royal Prophet (Ps. xlviii. 21), "Man when he was in honour did not understand ; he hath been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them." Alas ! this seems to be the case with millions of Christians.

3. Consider that our eternal welfare absolutely depends on our living up to the character of a Christian, and to the duties and obligations of the Christian religion ; in particular those we have taken upon us by our baptismal vows, and which are insisted upon as essential by our holy rule and Founder. These are all reduced into a small compass in those words of the Psalmist : "Turn away from evil and do good." This is a short abstract of the whole duty of a Christian. The first part requires a settled determination of the soul never to commit a wilful sin for any consideration whatsoever ; not even if life itself were at stake. The second part requires a constant attention to do the will of

God in all things, and to advance every day in the love of God. Do this, my soul, and thou shalt be a Christian indeed : persevere in this until death, and thou shalt receive the crown of eternal life.

Conclusion. Have always henceforward before thy eyes, both the dignity and the sanctity of the character of a Christian, and show it forth in thy life ; lest otherwise it rise in judgment against thee, and prove thy greater condemnation at that day, when thou shalt be called upon to give up an account of thy stewardship.

NOVEMBER 7.

On following the Light of Christ.

1. Consider those words of the Son of God (John viii. 12), "I am the Light of the world : he that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Man by sin had forfeited the true light ; he was fallen from the light of truth and life when he fell from his God ; he was fallen into the darkness of ignorance, error, and vice, and was sitting in the shadow of death. God sent the true Light from heaven, "which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world," when He sent His Son from heaven, in the bowels of His mercy, as the Orient from on high to visit us ; "to enlighten them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to direct our feet in the way of peace" (Luke i. 78, 79). Jesus Christ then came from heaven to enlighten our souls with His heavenly truth ; to bring us from the darkness of our errors and vices, to impart to us the light of faith, as a lamp to shine unto us in the dark place of this wretched world, till the true day dawn, and the daystar arise in our hearts (2 Pet. i. 19) ; to give us here the light of His divine grace for the time of our mortal pilgrimage, and to bring us hereafter to the light of glory, where in the light of God we shall see God the light for all eternity. Embrace, my soul, this light that comes down from heaven to visit thee ; and see thou follow it in the whole conduct of thy life. Take care lest thou incur the judgment of condemnation, by the light coming into the world, and thy loving darkness rather than the light (John iii. 19).

2. Consider that Jesus Christ came down from heaven to enlighten the world, both with His heavenly doctrine and His heavenly life. He came from God to be our teacher, and to open for us His school of heavenly truths : truths to which the world was a stranger at that time, and which the children of this world, blinded with their passions, and loving darkness more than light, will not understand even to this day, nor come to the light, lest their works should be reproved by it ; for they are evil

(John iii. 19, 20). This light of Christ reproves our self-love, and its unhappy offspring, with all our darling inclinations and affections: it confutes the maxims of flesh and blood, and the errors we are so apt to entertain with relation to worldly honour, interest and pleasure. It discovers to us the emptiness and vanity, the nothingness of all that passes away with time, and shows us that nothing is truly great, or deserves our esteem or affection, but what is eternal. This light of Christ teaches us to know both God and ourselves; it teaches us all virtues; poverty of spirit, humility, self-denial, meekness, patience, penance, conformity to the will of God and divine charity: it shows us the way to perfection and to a happy eternity: it conducts to God Himself and to the light of life that is with Him.

3. Consider that in order to come to the light of life, we must follow Christ, not only by believing His doctrine, but by walking in His footsteps, and imitating His virtues. "We must imitate His life and manners," says a holy man, "if we would be truly enlightened, and delivered from all blindness of heart. Let it then be our chief study, to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ" (à (Kempis, L. i. c. i.). Yes, Christians, by often meditating on the life of Christ, we shall learn how we ought to behave on all occasions: the bright light of His virtues will show us what we are to avoid, as well as what we are to follow on every occasion. He is the way, the truth, and the life (John xiv. 6). The light of His life shining on us, by means of daily meditation, will conduct us into this way, guide us to this truth, and bring us safe to this life, even to the very fountain-head of eternal life.

Conclusion. Follow henceforward, in the practice of thy life, the heavenly light, both of the doctrine and example of Jesus Christ. Walk after Him and His light; and thou shalt neither walk in darkness here, nor go into darkness hereafter. This following the light of Christ will bring thee to the happy society of the children of light in the region of light everlasting.

NOVEMBER 8.

One thing is necessary (*Luke x.* 42).

1. Consider, my soul, and open thy eyes to the great light of this divine sentence of thy Saviour: One thing is necessary. It will be of infinite service to thee to dispel the darkness and mists that encompass thee on all sides, and to direct thy steps to the sovereign truth, the Sovereign Good. Alas! what a multiplicity of cares and concerns about empty vanities and worldly toys is apt to take up our mind and heart. How busy are we all the day long, in catching flies! What a variety of amusements distracts our thoughts! In what dissipation do we generally

live! How little is there of God in our daily conversation! How few of our words or actions are referred to Him! It is too true that we let everything take place of that only business for which we came into this world! And yet all this variety and multiplicity which employs our thoughts, words and actions, is nothing to the purpose, whereas upon that one business our all depends for eternity.

2. Consider what this one thing necessary is, that is recommended by our Lord? Doubtless it is nothing else but to dedicate ourselves to the love and service of God, in order to secure the eternal salvation of our souls. Oh! "vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, but loving God, and serving Him alone" (Kempis). Yes, my soul, this is our only business, this is the business for which alone we came into this world; nothing else deserves to be called business; whatever our employment or calling be in the world, it must be subordinate to this; all our thoughts, words, and deeds should ever tend to God and to our eternal salvation. Whatever takes us off from attending to this great business is hurtful to us, whatever has no tendency to this one thing necessary, is all idle and vain. "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26).

3. Consider those words of our Saviour (Matt. vi. 33), "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." This kingdom of God, which we are commanded to seek in the first place, is the kingdom of grace in our souls, it is the kingdom of divine love. This kingdom of God is within us (Luke xvii. 21). It must be established in our interior. This justice of God is that by which He makes us just indeed through the merits of the blood of His Son Jesus Christ the Just: it is the charity of God, which is poured into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us (Rom. v. 5). This kingdom of divine love, this justice and charity of God in our souls, we must continually aspire to; this must be the first and greatest object of our longing desires; this we seek with all our power; for this we must pray with all the fervour of our hearts. And as to all things else, so far as they are necessary for us, our heavenly Father will not fail to furnish us with them. We have His divine word for it.

Conclusion. Follow in the practice of thy life these divine lessons of light and truth, by considering henceforward the love and service of God and the salvation of thy soul as thy only business, and all other concerns, compared with this, as nothing. Take care of this one thing necessary, and all shall be well with thee, both for time and eternity!

NOVEMBER 9.

Strive to Enter by the narrow Gate (Luke xiii. 24).

1. Consider how the light of Christ in the Gospel, represents to us the broad road of the world as infinitely dangerous to our souls, and as directly leading to the wide gate of eternal damnation. "Enter ye in at the narrow gate," saith He (Matt. vii. 13, 14), "for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction; and many there are who go in thereat. Oh, how narrow is the gate and how strait is the way that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it!" Here we see, there are two ways in which men walk in this life; and two gates out of this life into eternity. One of these ways is broad and spacious, agreeable to the world and the flesh, and crowded with multitudes of slaves to the world and the flesh, whom it conducts downhill to a wide gate, by which they no sooner enter, but they suddenly slip down a precipice into the bottomless pit of a miserable eternity. The other way is strait and narrow, rough and craggy, by reason of the restraints it puts upon our liberties and passions, and its disagreeableness to the corrupt inclinations of flesh and blood, and therefore few, in comparison, care to walk in it; but these few, by the favour of Heaven, walk on cheerfully towards the gate of life, assisted and comforted by Jesus Christ, whom they follow; and with Him, and through Him are happily introduced by this narrow gate into the most spacious and beautiful regions of never-ending bliss. See, my soul, which of these two ways thou art disposed to choose: and make that choice now, which thou wilt be glad to have made, for all eternity.

2. Consider what it is that engages such numbers of Christians to walk with so little concern in the broad road that leads to destruction, in spite of this solemn declaration of the gospel, and the light of faith. It is want of thinking: it is wilfully shutting their eyes against the light, and so running blindfold to the precipice: it is, in the language of the wise man (Wisdom vi. 12), being bewitched with worldly toys and cheating vanities, it is downright folly and madness, which they shall loudly condemn in hell for all eternity. Alas, how unhappy are they! How wretchedly blind indeed, to profess themselves followers of Christ; and yet to believe and follow the maxims of the world rather than the maxims of the Gospel: to obey the laws of the world, the flesh, and the devil, their mortal enemies, rather than the ordinances of their Saviour; to prefer lies, deceit and vanity before truth, darkness before light, slavery before liberty, misery before happiness, hell before heaven, and Satan before God! My soul, see thou never make so wretched a choice. Let not the world, the flesh and the devil, drag thee along with them in the broad road of

perdition ; it would be a sad thing to go to hell for company's sake. Choose the narrow way of self-denial and true devotion in the company of Christ and His saints ; and thou shalt live with them for ever.

3. Consider the frightful sentence, repeated more than once by our Lord, in the Gospel ; many are called, but few are chosen : for it has a very close connection with what He has said above, of the broad road that leads to eternal woe, and the narrow way that leads to everlasting life. Yes, Christians, many are called, but few are chosen : because the greater part of mortals are fond of the broad road, which gratifies their passions and corrupt inclinations ; and prefer the highway of the world, the way of self-love, the way of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, before the narrow way of self-denial and the love of God, which is less agreeable to flesh and blood. God, on His part, is infinitely good and merciful ; He desires that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, and His Son Christ Jesus gave Himself a redemption for all (1 Tim. ii. 4, 6). If then but few are chosen, it cannot be for want of good will in God ; but for want of correspondence on the part of man. It is for want of compliance with the necessary conditions of salvation, the chief of which is keeping the divine commandments. In a word, it is because men choose rather to walk in the broad road than in the narrow, which is choosing hell before heaven. So that the reason why they are not chosen, is because they have no real mind to be chosen.

Conclusion. Keep off, in the practice of thy life, from the broad road of the children of this world, and walk in the narrow way of the children of light, by living always in the fear of God, and keeping His commandments ; and thou shalt not fail of being of the number of the chosen.

NOVEMBER 10.

No man can serve Two Masters (*Matt. vi.* 24).

1. Consider this great principle of Christian morality laid down by our Lord in the Gospel : No man can serve two masters ; by which He gives us to understand that there is no such thing as serving Him and saving our souls ; at the same time serving the world, the flesh, or the devil. For these are enemies to God, and claim service of us, which our great Master absolutely disallows ; so that we cannot please them without displeasing Him ; nor be friends to them without being enemies to Him. Christians, we have all manner of obligations to serve God ; He is our only true Master : He is our first Beginning and our last End ; He is our Creator and our Redeemer ; infinitely good in Him-

self, and infinitely good to us; He is the source of our very being and of all our good; we came into the world for nothing else but to serve Him; to His service we were solemnly dedicated when we were made Christians; serving Him is to make us happy both in time and eternity. But what pretension can the world, the flesh, or the devil have to our service? Or what obligations have we to them? They are all of them mortal enemies to our true welfare and the eternal salvation of our souls; if we serve them, they will make us miserable for ever. Let us then never be so wretched, so mad, so wicked, as to put them in competition with God, or withdraw any part of our service from Him, to bestow it upon traitors and rebels, who are enemies to all that is good.

2. Consider the particular application which our Lord makes of this principle, to warn us against the love and service of mammon, that is of worldly riches, and all the other perishable goods, as we call them, of this deluded and deluding world: you cannot serve, said He, both God and mammon. No man has any inclination to serve the devil for his own sake, or out of any love he can have for this filthy monster; but this wicked enemy makes use of the mammon of the world and the allurements of the flesh, as baits to draw poor unthinking souls to him and engage them in his slavery. Therefore both here and in many other places of Holy Writ we are warned against these baits of Satan, and especially against the love and service of this mammon of iniquity, as inconsistent with the love and service of God and destructive of the salvation of our souls, because it is setting up an idol, in opposition to the living God, and loving and serving the creature instead of the Creator, who is blessed for evermore. Dear Lord, preserve us from being ever guilty of such treason!

3. Consider that as we cannot serve both God and mammon, so we cannot serve both God and pleasure; we cannot serve both God and pride; we cannot serve both God and impure affections, or unhappy self-love, which is the source of all our evils. And so in general, with regard to every thing else, the love of which takes us off from the love and service of the living God; it always holds good, that we cannot serve both the Creator and the creature. Our God is a jealous lover; He will allow of no love, but what is regular and orderly and kept in subjection to the love of Him. He declares against a divided heart (Osea x. 2); "Their heart is divided," said He, "now they shall perish." He claims the whole heart as His own due. He will allow of no rival. See, my soul, upon what conditions God will accept thee. Thou must be wholly His, without reserve, or He will not receive thee. In the offering thou makest of thyself to His divine service, thou must take care not to keep back, by fraud, any part like Ananias and Saphira (Acts v.), lest thou fall under the like judgment as they did!

Conclusion. Admit no other master of thy heart and affection but God who made thy heart for Himself, and all things else for thee. None but He can fill thy heart; all other things are nothing when compared with Him. Fear Him, love Him alone, give thy whole self to Him: thus shalt thou be wholly His and He thine for all eternity.

NOVEMBER 11.

He that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple (Luke xiv. 33).

1. Consider that every Christian ought to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. The very name implies as much, and the first Christians were known by no other name than that of disciples, that is of scholars and followers of this heavenly Master. See then, my soul, what the character of a Christian obliges thee to, by the declaration of the Son of God Himself. If thou wilt be a disciple of Christ, a Christian indeed, to the purpose of securing to thyself that happy eternity with the living God that is prepared for Christ's true disciples, thou must renounce all things else, how near or dear soever they may be to thee, to follow Him. Thou must renounce them, if not in effect, at least in affection, by taking off thy heart from them, and transferring it to thy only Sovereign Good; and thou must renounce them, in effect too, as often and as far as they stand in thy way so as to hinder thee from following Christ. This is the great and fundamental lesson of practical Christianity, this is the abridgment of the gospel: to give up all that thou mayest find all: to be disengaged from the creature, that thou mayest be united to the Creator.

2. Consider that our Lord explains this obligation of renouncing all things else to be His disciples, by two comparisons: the one of a man who purposes to build a tower, but first sits down to reckon up the charges to see if he has wherewithal to finish the work; the other of a king who is going to war against another king, but first considers whether he has sufficient forces to encounter his adversary. Every Christian is concerned in these two comparisons; inasmuch as if he desires to be happy for ever, he must raise a spiritual building upon the foundation, which is Christ; a building that may be proof against all storms and inundations: a tower that may stand for ever; and every Christian is engaged in a warfare against the prince of darkness and his allies; wherein if he does not come off with victory, he must be miserable for all eternity. Therefore the Christian must sit down and reckon up the necessary charges of this building; to see that he may be able to finish it: and he must take care to secure to himself sufficient forces to enable him to carry on

this war and subdue the enemy. Now it is by renouncing all things else to follow Christ that we are associated to Him and made partakers of His treasures; and we exchange our weakness for His strength: and thus we are enabled both to elevate our building even to heaven, and to overthrow the powers of hell.

3. Consider how true it is that our affection to the things of this world is indeed the chiefest hindrance to us; as well in carrying on our spiritual building, as in the conflict with our spiritual enemies. The builder will make no progress in his building if, instead of applying himself seriously to the work, he loses his time in amusing himself about things nothing to his purpose; or if he takes little or no care to procure the necessary materials; or even suffers his hands and feet to be shackled when he should be at work. Such is the case of all Christians as have not yet mortified their affections to the things of the world. These, alas! take up their thoughts and employ their time. What should be expended in carrying on the building is wasted upon these; and the builder lies grovelling upon the earth, tied down with the chains of his misplaced affections. And as for the wrestling in which we are engaged with the spirits of wickedness; it is no less certain that nothing gives them a greater hold on us than our unmortified affections to these worldly toys. It is like carrying a load of clothes about us, when we are to wrestle with one that is stript; who will thus be sure to have the advantage over us. Therefore we who are to wrestle with the devil, who is naked, must fling off our garments, with St. Gregory (Homil. 32), by renouncing our worldly affections, or we shall be sure to be brought down by him.

Conclusion. Make it thy perpetual study to take thy affections from all things of earth; and to disregard the creature, that thou mayest find the Creator. And seeing that great grace is required in order to untie the soul from all that is not God, and carry her up upon the wings of the dove, to rest eternally in Him, continually pray for His grace.

NOVEMBER 12.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself (*Matt. xvi.* 24).

1. Consider that the disciple of Jesus Christ, by the rule of the Gospel, is not only obliged to renounce (at least in affection) all things for the sake of his Master, but what is hardest of all, he must also renounce and deny himself. And this renouncing himself is absolutely insisted upon by our Lord as the first, most essential, and indispensable condition for every one that would come after and belong to Him. Yes, Christians, there is such

irreconcilable opposition between this self, strangely corrupted by sin, surrounded with darkness, and bent upon evil, and the purity and sanctity of Jesus Christ, and the bright light of His truth; that there is no coming at the one without renouncing the other, there is no coming at divine charity, which teaches us to love God with our whole heart, without declaring eternal war with self-love, the capital enemy to the love of God and the parent of all vices. And therefore we are not only commanded in the Gospel to renounce and deny ourselves, in order to follow Christ, but also to hate ourselves, or as it is expressed in the original (Luke xiv. 26, and John xii. 25), to hate our souls in this world, in order to save them in the next. See, my soul, upon what conditions thou art to be a disciple of the Son of God; thou must not only renounce all things else; thou must renounce and hate thyself too.

2. Consider the grounds upon which is founded this obligation of denying and renouncing ourselves in this world: namely, that we may be in a proper condition to give ourselves entirely to God; and thus leaving ourselves, may find Him, and be eternally His. So that in effect, this denying and renouncing ourselves is the best way of loving ourselves; because it procures us the greatest good, and brings us to our Sovereign Good. On the other hand, that unhappy self-seeking, and loving to gratify ourselves, brings mischief upon us both for time and eternity. If then we are to renounce affection to all things else, in order to follow Christ, lest the love of them should divide our heart from Him, how much more must we renounce self-love, for the love of Him; as being stronger than all our other affections; and far more apt to captivate our heart and shut out the love of God. Yes, my soul, self-love is indeed the greatest enemy both of thy God and of thy true and everlasting welfare, and therefore thou must not only renounce it, but abhor it with a perfect hatred; and turn all thy forces against it in order to abolish and destroy it.

3. Consider and attend to the sentiments of a great servant of God upon this subject: "My son, thou must give all for all, and be nothing of thy own. Know that the love of thyself is more hurtful to thee than anything in the world. Thou canst not possess perfect liberty unless thou wholly deny thyself. All self-seekers and self-lovers are bound in fetters, full of desires, full of cares, unsettled and seeking always their own ease, and not the things of Jesus Christ, but oftentimes devising and framing that which shall not stand; for all shall come to nothing that proceeds not from God. Take this short and perfect word: Forsake all, and thou shalt find all: leave thy desires, and thou shalt find rest. Consider this well, and when thou shalt have put it in practice, thou shalt understand all things" (Following of Christ, l. iii. c. 27. 32). And again: "Son, as much as thou canst go out of thyself, so much shalt

thou be able to enter into me. As desiring nothing abroad brings peace at home, so relinquishing thyself interiorly joins thee to God. I will have thee learn the perfect renouncing of thyself in my will, without contradiction or complaint. Follow me, I am the way, the truth, and the life.—If thou will be my disciple, deny thyself" (C. 56). My soul, let these be thy sentiments also; and strive to conform thy practice to them.

Conclusion. Give both thyself and all things else to follow Christ; and by following Him to come at thy Sovereign Good; and to enjoy Him for all eternity. If thou wert to give ten thousand worlds to purchase such a treasure, all that thou shouldst give would fall infinitely short of the value of it.

NOVEMBER 13.

Except your justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven (*Matt. v.* 20).

1. Consider how much it concerns us all to know what we must do to save our souls; and what kind of justice that is, what degree of virtue is necessary to bring us to heaven, lest we deceive ourselves, or let ourselves be imposed upon by the enemy with false appearances and outward show, and, catching at the shadow of virtue, lose both the substance of it and our own souls. The Scribes and Pharisees were the most precise amongst the Jews, and professed the greatest zeal for the law of God, and true religion; they prayed much, they gave large alms, and they fasted frequently; so that they passed for saints amongst the people; and yet we are assured by the mouth of truth itself that except our virtue exceed theirs, we shall have no share in His heavenly kingdom. See then, my soul, and examine well in what their justice was defective; that so thou mayest avoid their defects, lest thou perish with them; for why shouldst thou suffer thyself to be deluded, to the loss both of thy God and of thyself for all eternity?

2. Consider that the justice of the Scribes and Pharisees was many ways deficient; but more especially in this, that it contented itself with reforming and regulating the outside, whilst it neglected the interior, which is the true seat of Christian justice. They "made clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, whilst the inside was full of iniquity" (Luke xi. 39). Their good works were not done with a pure intention; they sought not God, but themselves in all they did; their prayers, alms, and fasting, were directed to gaining the applause of the world, to the end they might be honoured and esteemed by men. And whilst they avoided the more scandalous excesses of the grosser carnal

sins of drunkenness and impurity, which might have rendered them infamous in the eyes of the world, they made no scruple of the spiritual sins of envy, hatred, detraction, covetousness, and extravagant pride and conceit of themselves, joined with contempt of others. Thus the good they seemed to do was vitiated and corrupted; their virtues were but in appearance and before the eyes of men; but their vices were real and abominable in the sight of God. Christians, take heed of this leaven of the Pharisees, as your Lord admonishes you: take heed of hypocrisy, ostentation, and outward show of devotion, destitute of the real substance of it. All the glory of the true spouse, the daughter of the King, is within; it lies hidden in the interior of the soul. Take heed lest pride or vainglory vitiate your good actions, by vitiating your intention. Keep yourselves clean, not only from the defilements of the flesh, but of the spirit also; for these are the more heinous sins of the two. See that nothing of the Pharisee corrupt the Christian in you.

3. Consider what that justice is which Jesus Christ insists upon as necessary to the salvation of our souls. It consists not in mere outward profession; for "not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father who is in Heaven" (Matt. vii. 12); nor will faith alone suffice to Christian justice (James ii. 17, 24). Nor will alms, prayers, or fasting alone, make any one just (as we see in the case of the Pharisees), nor any outward form of worship without the inward spirit; nor anything else that can be separated from obedience to the commandments, from true Christian humility and divine charity. No, my soul, the justice that is to bring thee to Heaven is to keep the commandments (Matt. xix. 17). It is to do the will of thy Father who is in heaven (Matt. vii. 21). It is to be poor in spirit (Matt. v. 3). It is to be humble like a little child (Matt. xviii. 3, 4). It is to love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength, and to love thy neighbour as thyself. This is Christian justice indeed! Do this, and thou shalt live. But where any part of this is wanting, nothing else can make any man just.

Conclusion. Be in earnest in seeking and following after Christian justice by purity of intention in all thy works; by sincerity and simplicity, or uprightness of soul; by true humility of heart; and above all things, by fleeing sin and loving God; and thou shalt be just indeed before the Lord, and entitled to His heavenly kingdom.

NOVEMBER 14.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a Treasure, &c. (*Matt. xiii.* 44).

1. Consider that by the kingdom of heaven in this, and many other places of the gospel, we are to understand that heavenly kingdom by which God reigns by His grace in our souls. A heavenly kingdom indeed, which we are commanded to seek in the first place (Matt. vi. 33), and which we are taught daily to pray for, in the second petition of the Lord's prayer. Now this kingdom of grace in our souls is likened to a treasure, because of its inestimable value; it is worth more than all the kingdoms of the earth; it brings God Himself into our souls to live and reign there for ever. But then it is a hidden treasure, because the children of this world are strangers to the true value of it; and though they have heard of the field where it is to be found, by seeking and digging for it; they are far more fond of childish toys which amuse them at present, than of a treasure unseen; and therefore they are unwilling to be either at the charge of purchasing this field, or at the pains of digging for this treasure. Not so the man in the gospel, who, having discovered this treasure, sets his whole heart upon it, hides it diligently, and for joy thereof, goes and sells all he has and buys that field. See, my soul, if this be thy disposition. Dost thou consider this kingdom of divine grace as a treasure indeed, and the richest of all treasures? Is thy heart set upon it? For where thy treasure is, there thy heart will be. Art thou willing to purchase at any rate that blessed field where this treasure lies!

2. Consider the lessons we are taught by our Lord in this parable, particularly with regard to the value we ought to set upon divine grace, and the great esteem and affection we ought to have for our spiritual advancement, and for all such things as may help our souls, and bring them nearer to God. We are also taught that the Christian who desires to secure to himself the heavenly treasure which he has begun to discover, must not make a show of it by ostentation or vainglory; which would be the direct way to lose it; but must hide it by humility; like a traveller who, carrying a treasure about him, endeavours to conceal it for fear of robbers. Moreover, we are taught that to make this treasure our own, we must purchase the field where it lies; and that this purchase will cost us all we are worth. The field in which this spiritual treasure is concealed is true wisdom; it is a devout and virtuous life; it is following Christ in good earnest, and being His true disciples. Now to purchase a field of so great value as this is, we must part with all things else; that is, we must give up all other affections to embrace and follow Christ;

but then, in exchange, He will make over to us all His treasures, and Himself besides.

3. Consider, Christian soul, if you desire to have a share in this great happiness, by what steps you are to advance towards it and come to the possession of it. And, first, you must be convinced by the Word of God and by the light of faith, that there is a treasure of inestimable value designed by your heavenly Father for you, to enrich you both for time and eternity, if you will but make use of the proper means to find it and make it your own. The next step must be to conceive a great esteem for this heavenly treasure, an ardent desire to acquire it, and a strong resolution to spare neither pains nor cost in the acquisition of it. The desire and resolution must be followed by diligent inquiry after the field of wisdom and virtue, where this treasure is hidden, and then digging there till it is found. Now all this is to be effected by the exercise of consideration and mental prayer. Yes, my soul, it is by daily opening thy eyes to the light of God and to His divine truths in meditation that thou shalt both learn what a treasure there is in virtue, and how thou art to be put in possession of it. Here thou shalt discover the beauty of holiness; how sweet it is to love God, and how happy to serve Him in earnest; here thou shalt be inflamed with a fervent desire of procuring for thyself so great a happiness, and with a holy hunger and thirst after it. Pondering well, by deep consideration, eternal truths, is like digging for the treasure of the kingdom of heaven; and the affections and resolutions of the soul, by which she is determined to consecrate the remainder of her life to divine love, is like selling all to purchase the field where this treasure is deposited.

Conclusion. Use thy best endeavours to seek without ceasing for this treasure of the kingdom of heaven in the field of virtue and devotion; and dig daily for it by the exercise of meditation and mental prayer, and thou shalt not fail to find it.

NOVEMBER 15.

On the parable of the Marriage Feast (Matt. xxii.).

1. Consider how our Lord here likens the kingdom of heaven (that is His spiritual kingdom which He came from heaven to establish, and which is to bring our souls to heaven) to a marriage feast which a great king makes for the wedding of his son. To this feast many are invited who refuse to come, many take no notice of the invitation, but go their ways, one to his farm, another to his traffic, many afflict and persecute even to death the messengers that are sent to call them to the wedding. All these are rejected and condemned, and in their place the poor, the blind,

and the lame are gathered together from the highways and hedges, and are brought in to be guests at the royal feast. But the man who presumed to come without a wedding garment, is ordered to be bound hand and foot and cast out into exterior darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. So far the parable ; now let us see how it is to be applied, and what sacred truths we are to learn from it. The Son of God came down from heaven to wed Himself to our human nature by the mystery of His incarnation ; and to every one of our souls in particular by a happy union of grace and love. This is that wedding which the great King of heaven and earth makes for His only Son. The marriage feast with which this wedding is celebrated, is begun here upon earth, by grace, in the souls of as many as sincerely come to Christ with faith and love ; and shall be perpetuated hereafter by the eternal enjoyment of Him in His heavenly paradise. To this marriage feast both Jews and Gentiles were long ago invited by the Apostles and other messengers of God ; and all nations are still invited to the same, as well by apostolic preachers sent amongst them for their conversion, as by many other ways by which God daily calls souls to His love and service, in order to their salvation. Happy they who duly correspond with these heavenly calls, and readily come to this feast, to which they are so lovingly invited by the great King ! But then they must take care to come with proper dispositions, signified by the wedding-garment ; without which they must not expect any part with the Bridegroom in His everlasting banquet.

2. Consider the infinite goodness of God manifested to us in this parable, by inviting us all to this heavenly feast ; considering what this feast is, what kind of entertainment He has prepared for us and how wretched and undeserving we are of any such favour. But oh, the strange stupidity of so many poor thoughtless mortals who daily slight and neglect this divine invitation ! How blind, how miserable, how wicked are they to prefer this farm, this traffic, these empty air-bubbles before this divine banquet, where God desires to feast their souls with Himself, by the sweet blessings and communications of His graces here, and by filling them for all eternity with the plenty of His house, and making them drink of the torrent of His pleasures at the very fountain of life.

3. Consider the dreadful consequence of neglecting or rejecting these heavenly invitations by which we are called to the marriage feast of the Lamb. Alas ! our all is at stake : our whole happiness for time and eternity absolutely depends upon our coming to His feast. We shall be perpetually miserable if we are excluded from it. And shall we be so wretched, as wilfully to exclude ourselves by refusing to come, when we are so pressingly invited by the King of heaven ? Will He not resent this contemptuous treatment ; this slighting His gracious calls ; this preferring the

vanities and lying fooleries of the world before Him and His banquet? Nothing moves Him more to indignation! This crying sin is the principal cause of the reprobation of all that are lost. And therefore our Lord concludes this parable with that terrible sentence, that many are called but few are chosen; to excite us to diligence and fervour in corresponding with grace; and to convince us that if we are not of the number of the elect, the fault is ours in not answering the call of Heaven; but preferring mere baubles, even the idols of our passions, before that marriage feast to which He so graciously invites us.

Conclusion. Secure at least thy eternal welfare by ready compliance with the gracious calls of Heaven; and by being serious and in earnest, in hastening to this feast of grace to which thou art invited. But remember to take with thee the wedding garment of divine love, with a happy and holy resolution of dedicating what remains of thy life to thy God; of flying all known and wilful sin more than any other evil; of being faithful until death; and of labouring to advance every day in the way of God and true life. With this wedding garment thou shalt be both a welcome and an eternal guest; without it thou shalt be sentenced to be cast into the exterior darkness.

NOVEMBER 16.

On the parable of the barren Fig-tree (*Luke xiii.*).

1. Consider that Christians are like trees, planted in the vineyard of Christ; and that He expects of them all that they should bring forth fruit, each one in his kind. He will not be content with their making a fair show with beautiful leaves; nor yet with a meaner sort of fruit unworthy of His vineyard; but He requires that they should bring forth good fruit, and declares (Matt. vii. 19), "that every tree that bringeth forth not good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire." This sentence then stands against all such trees as are barren in our Lord's vineyard; yes, the axe is already laid at the root of them (Matt. iii. 10). However, as we see in the parable of the fig-tree, God, in His great patience and mercy, bears with them for a while, and suspends the execution of the sentence in hopes of their coming in time to bring forth good fruit: till after repeated disappointments He lets the sentence take place; and suddenly cuts them down to be the fuel of a fire that shall never be extinguished. See, my soul, and dread the sad consequences of continuing to be a barren tree in the vineyard of our Lord; despising the riches of His goodness and patience and long suffering, with which He waits in hopes of good fruit.

2. Consider, as to thyself, how much thou owest to God for

having planted thee in His vineyard; and for all that He has done for thee, that thou mightest be fruitful. How often has He visited thee during these past years with the dew of heaven, and with the wholesome showers of divine grace. What cultivation has He not daily bestowed upon thee? How early a knowledge has He given thee of Himself; how often hast thou been favoured with His heavenly word, by which His divine will has been notified to thee? How often hast thou been admitted to His sacraments, the fountains of grace and life? These are great advantages indeed: these have made many trees very fruitful; these have made many great saints. But what fruits have they produced in thee? How hast thou corresponded with these visits and favours of Heaven? Hast thou hitherto brought forth good fruit, or bad fruit? Hast thou not at best contented thyself with the leaves of some outward performances, like those of the Scribes and Pharisees, that might please the eyes of the world, without bearing any real fruit of solid Christian virtue? If so, remember what a sentence stands against thee; and prevent the execution of it by a speedy and hearty repentance and conversion to God; and by beginning at least to bring forth the good fruit of a new life before the time of thy reprieve expire, the term of which is unknown to thee, and may be very near at hand.

3. Consider that the fruit which God expects from thee, is not merely that thou shouldst refrain from scandalous excesses, or that thou shouldst lead a moral honest life as many pagans have done; or that thou shouldst frequent the public worship of the Church; or any other external duties which may be liable to be ill performed for want of a pure intention, or corrupted with pride or self-love; but the fruits which God calls for and insists upon, are such as are solid and sound at heart; such as are never to be found in hypocrites or impostors, or in any but truly good Christians. Such are unfeigned humility and contempt of ourselves, mortification of our own will, our passions and corrupt inclinations, by the virtues of obedience and self-denial; conformity in all things with the holy will of God; sincere piety and devotion, and above all things true and perfect charity; by loving God with our whole heart, and every neighbour, whether friend or enemy, in Him, and for Him. These are good fruits indeed; and the trees that bring forth such fruits as these, are good trees. But where these are wanting, and either pride, passion, or self-love prevails, neither alms nor fasting, nor long prayers, nor daily frequenting the sacraments, nor speaking with the tongues of men and angels, nor prophesying, nor working miracles, nor even raising the dead to life, will secure any tree from the dreadful judgment of being cut down and cast into the fire.

Conclusion. Look well to thyself and examine what kind of fruits thine are; whether good and sound, and fit to be pre-

sented to the Lord of the vineyard: or at the best but wild and sour, or rotten at heart, by the corruption of thy pride and self-conceit; and take care to prune away whilst thou hast time whatever either hinders the fruit from ripening, or rots and corrupts it. Thy eternal welfare absolutely depends upon thy bringing forth a store of good fruit: upon which thou mayest live for ever.

NOVEMBER 17.

On the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke xv.).

1. Consider in the prodigal son a lively image of the misery of every poor sinner who, by wilful sin, goes away from his father's house into a far country, even the region of death, and there wastes his substance by living riotously; that is, loses and squanders away all the grace he had received from God; and abuses his gifts and talents by making them subservient to his criminal passions and lusts. Alas! how soon does he experience the famine that reigns in that country? A mighty famine indeed! A want of the bread of life and of all true nourishment; a perpetual emptiness of soul; a hunger and thirst that is never to be satisfied. For all that is brought to market there, though sold at a very dear rate, is but mere wind, and bubbles that can never satisfy. In vain does the poor wretch, under this famine, sell himself for a slave to one of the citizens of that region, even to Satan, the ruler of that land of darkness, who sets him to feed swine, viz., his own brutal passions and carnal inclinations. But he finds himself still perishing of hunger and want; he is not allowed to fill himself even with the husks which the swine eat: they leave him still empty. Ah! sinners, see the state to which you reduce yourselves when you turn your backs upon your Father, and choose rather to be slaves of the devil than children of God. Never expect any solid satisfaction, or so much as one happy hour, till you return home again to your father's house!

2. Consider the steps by which the prodigal was reclaimed and brought home to his father; and thou shalt find that the beginning of his conversion was his return to himself, and being made sensible of his great misery. Alas! the poor deluded soul, at the same time that she leaves her father's house, by forgetting her God, leaves also, and forgets herself and is so strangely blinded and deluded by the world, the flesh, and the devil, as to imagine herself free under the worst of slaveries; rich under the extremity of want; and honourable and happy in the very midst of disgrace, confusion and uneasiness. But when she begins to open her inward eyes to the light of God by serious consideration, and to return into herself, she is greatly alarmed

at the sight of her wretched condition, and the dreadful dangers that surround her on all sides, and threaten her with nothing less than a miserable eternity. A ready correspondence with this heavenly light and grace, by a desire to return to the best of Fathers, is the first step to the prodigal's conversion. See, my soul, how he rises up immediately, without delay, to follow the call. See, with what dispositions of profound humility, with what sense of his own unworthiness, with what deep sorrow and contrition for his sins he makes the best of his way home. Give ear to his sentiments: "I will arise," saith he, "and go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." Oh, that all sinners who have imitated the prodigal in his extravagances, would imitate him also, by returning to themselves, as he did, rising without delay to go and seek the true Father of their souls, with the like dispositions of a contrite and humble heart!

3. Consider the infinite goodness and mercy of God, expressed in the manner in which this father received the prodigal child returning to him. He did not stay till he came to his house; but "when he was yet a great way off he saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him." He scarce gave him time to confess his guilt before he ordered "his servants to bring forth quickly the first robe, and to put it on him, and to put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and to bring the fatted calf and kill it: and let us eat," said he, "and make merry: because this my son was dead, and is come to life; he was lost, and is found." Blessed for ever be this infinite goodness and mercy which daily exerts itself in this manner; and works the like wonder in favour of penitent sinners! God first excites in them the desire to come home to Him; He has pity on them when as yet they are a great way off; He runs out to meet them; He lovingly receives them into His embrace; He clothes them again with the sacred robe of divine grace; He restores them to the honour and dignity of His children and to all the ornaments of virtue and grace, which they had forfeited by sin; He admits them to the divine banquet of the Body and Blood of His only Son; and causes all His heavenly court to celebrate a feast of joy upon their conversion. And shall not all this loving kindness, this tender mercy, these extraordinary favours shown to penitent sinners, encourage thee, my soul, and effectually determine thee to quit for good and all the husks of swine, and run to the embrace of this Father of mercies?

Conclusion. If thy case be like that of the prodigal, in being in a far country, away from thy Father's house; that is, at a distance from thy God by mortal sin; perishing with hunger and want among the husks of swine; determine to imitate the

prodigal in his ready correspondence with grace; in the resolution with which he at once rises and returns to his Father; and in his dispositions of humility and contrition; and this great Father will undoubtedly receive thee, as He did him; and all His heavenly family shall feast and rejoice at thy conversion.

NOVEMBER 18.

On the parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke xvi.).

1. Consider that this steward being accused to his lord of having wasted his substance, was called upon by him "to give an account of his stewardship," for that he could now be steward no longer; and therefore he sought to provide for himself, by making friends among his master's debtors, by discounting a considerable part of what they stood charged in their bills to his master, that so they might be willing to receive him into their houses and entertain him. In which, though he acted iniquitously towards his master, he did wisely according to what the world calls wisdom, in providing for himself against the evil day: for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. "And I say to you," saith our Lord, "make to yourselves friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." See here, Christians, the great lesson designed for you in this parable. Your having so often wasted the goods of your Great Master, ought to give you a just apprehension of being quickly called by Him to account, and deprived of your stewardship. What then must you do, in order to your future support and everlasting livelihood? You must make yourselves friends, by good use of the mammon of this world; that is, by liberal alms to God's poor servants; you must diligently exercise charity; you must use your best endeavours to reclaim sinners from the error of their way; and thus procure for them a discharge from their debts: and your Lord will commend you for having done wisely for yourselves; and these friends you have made, will, through His mercy, be qualified to receive you hereafter into eternal mansions.

2. Consider in how many respects we are all stewards to this great Lord. All that we have is His; our very being; our soul and body; all our powers, faculties and senses, all our gifts and talents; all that we possess corporally or spiritually, our whole time and all our worldly substance. In regard to these things, we are stewards of God and accountable to Him. These are all goods belonging to this great Master, with which He has intrusted us. We are unjust stewards, if we waste any part of them; and employing any of them otherwise than

according to His holy will and divine ordinances, will be accounted wasting them in the eyes of Him before whom we shall one day most certainly appear to give an account of our stewardship, and of all the years we have had His goods in our hands. Who shall be able to stand this examination of accounts, upon the issue of which eternity depends? Who shall be able to answer for one article in a thousand?

3. Consider, my soul, those words in the parable as addressed to thee this day: Give an account of thy stewardship; and see what thou couldst say for thyself, if this day were to be thy last, and thy accounts were to be immediately inspected. Thou knowest not the day nor the hour; see then what account thou couldst give, if this were to be the day: for why shouldst thou expose thyself any longer to the dreadful danger of being called upon, when unprepared, to thy eternal condemnation? Alas! has there been any time of thy life in which thou hast acted the part of an honest and faithful steward, with relation to the goods of thy Master? How little share has He had in thy thoughts, words, and actions? How little of thy time has been employed in His service? How often have thy powers and faculties and thy senses, both exterior and interior, been alienated from Him, and made instruments of offence! How often have His choicest gifts and talents been abused and perverted? What is become of all the graces purchased for thee by the Blood of Christ? Where are the inspirations, calls and reproaches of conscience with which He has visited thee? Where the Sacraments thou hast received? The Word of God, and so many other spiritual advantages or temporal blessings thou hast been favoured with? How few are there of all these goods of thy Master which thou hast not wasted or perverted? He has even made over in a manner to thee the Passion and Death of His only Son; and deposited all His merits with thee in the sacred mysteries; and what little use or advantage hast thou hitherto made of them? Ah! my poor soul, in how wretched a state indeed are thy accounts? And what have we not to apprehend, from the justice of our Lord, for having been such wicked stewards all our lifetime?

Conclusion. Now at least, set thy accounts in order, rectify all that has hitherto been amiss and henceforward begin upon a new system; by dedicating thyself and all thou hast to the love and service of Him to whom all belongs. It is a crying injustice to waste His goods; how much more to employ them against Himself by wilful sin?

NOVEMBER 19.

On the Rich Man and the Beggar.

1. Consider the words of our Lord in the Gospel: "There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen; and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who lay at his gate full of sores; desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table: and no one did give him: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died, and was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom; and he cried out, Father Abraham, have mercy on me; and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him, Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime; and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is fixed a great chaos; so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot; nor from thence come hither." See, my soul, a great difference in life; between the rich man, abounding in all that this world could give, and living in pleasures and delights; and the poor man wanting even the necessaries of life, and languishing under a multitude of sores and ulcers; but, observe how quickly the scene is changed; and what a great and eternal difference immediately succeeds after death; when the one is comforted with everlasting joy and happiness; and the other plunged into the extremity of endless misery, where he cannot be allowed even one drop of water to cool his tongue.

2. Consider what it was that brought the rich man to this place of eternal woe, since there is no mention in the gospel of any scandalous excesses that he was guilty of; no blasphemies, nor perjuries, nor profane swearing; no murders, adulteries, nor other impurities; no thefts, rapines, nor extortions, no slanders, detractions, nor lies; it is only said that he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day: things in which, considering his state and condition, the world apprehends no sin. What then can we suppose to have been the occasion of his damnation? Christians, his sins were chiefly sins of omission of the service of God; he led an idle life; he loved his pleasures more than God; he made a god of his belly; he had no concern for the poor; so that he lived in a continual breach of the two great commandments—of loving God with his whole heart, and his neighbour as himself; and certainly there need no other sins to

send any man to hell. See, then, thou never flatter thyself with the imagination of thy being innocent, or promise thyself security because thou art not guilty of grosser sins, whilst thou leadest an idle, unprofitable life, following the ways and maxims of worldlings, and loving the honours, riches, or pleasures of the world better than God; for such a life can never bring any one to heaven; it is too remote from the narrow way that leads to life.

3. Consider, in the case of the poor man, the happy fruit of patient suffering; of true conformity in all things to the will of God, and of always keeping close to Him by recollection and divine love, in every place, occupation, or condition of life. For it was thus the poverty and the pains of Lazarus were sanctified and made the seeds of eternal happiness. Oh, that all such Christians as share in any part of his sufferings, were so wise and happy in their comportment under them, as to reap the like fruits for eternity from their temporal evils! But want of a lively faith in the great truths of God, of a true sense of the goods and evils of eternity, or of seriously considering, is too often the bane both of rich and poor: for otherwise, as our Lord here informs us, these Scripture truths ought to influence us more powerfully towards the total change of our lives than even if any person were to come from the dead to preach unto us.

Conclusion. Labour and pray for heavenly wisdom to conduct thee in such a manner in the midst of the goods and evils of this transitory life, that both the one and the other may be made subservient to thy eternal happiness.

NOVEMBER 20.

On the good Samaritan (Luke x.).

1. Consider that our Lord, to teach us that charity which we owe to the whole world without exception or distinction of nation or opinion, proposes Himself to us in this parable as the perfect pattern of this charity, in the person of a Samaritan, a people differing both in nation and religion from the Jews. "A certain man," saith He, "went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who also stripped him, and having wounded him, went away leaving him half dead. And it chanced that a certain Priest went down the same way, and seeing him, passed by. In like manner also a Levite, when he was near the place and saw him, passed by. But a certain Samaritan, being on his journey, came near him; and seeing him, was moved with compassion; and, going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine; and setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two

pence, and gave them to the host, and said : Take care of him ; and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I, at my return, will repay thee." See, my soul, in this charitable Samaritan, an image of what thy Lord has done for thee ; and go thou, as He tells thee in the application of the parable, and do in like manner ; that is, show the like mercy and charity to thy neighbours as Christ has shown to thee. This will be charity both to them and to thyself ; since it will bring thee to possess eternal life (ver. 25). Yes, my soul, "this do, and thou shalt live" (ver. 28).

2. Consider in this parable, the wretched condition into which man has fallen by sin. Going down from Jerusalem, which is interpreted the vision of peace, to Jericho, which signifies the moon (that is, turning his back to his God and all true peace, to seek false happiness in the forbidden fruit of worldly enjoyments, which are continually changing like the moon) ; he fell among robbers, that is, he fell into the hands of wicked spirits, and became their prey. He was stripped by them of all the gifts of grace with which he had been adorned by his Creator, and was grievously wounded in all his powers and faculties ; his understanding was darkened with ignoranee and error in his notions of good and evil ; and his will perverted with malice in preferring evil before good ; all his passions were let loose upon him, having lost their bridle of original justice ; and his whole soul was in strange disorder ; weak, beyond expression, to everything good, and violently bent upon evil. Thus he lay half dead : his better part, the soul, being dead indeed, by the loss of its true life, the grace of God ; and both the soul and body condemned by divine justice to a second and eternal death ; and in this state he was like to remain, being utterly incapable, of himself, of making one step towards his deliverance ; and so must have inevitably perished to eternity, had not this good Samaritan come down from heaven to his relief. O dismal consequences of sin ! O infinite goodness of God ! And shalt not thou, my soul, who hast had experience of both one and the other ; henceforth dread, detest, and fly with all thy power from that worst of evils, sin ; and embrace with all thy affections this sovereign goodness of thy God ?

3. Consider by descending to particulars, what God in His infinite goodness has done for lost man in sending His only Son to be our pious Samaritan, to deliver us from all our evils and impart all good to our souls. Alas ! the priest and the Levite passed us by, and left us languishing under our wounds and miseries. For the law and its ministers were not able to heal or to relieve us. But our good Samaritan had compassion on us ; His tender mercies brought Him down from His throne of glory to our assistance. He has bound up our wounds, by suffering Himself to be wounded for our iniquities ; that by His stripes we might be healed. He has applied to our wounded souls the heavenly medicines of His

Sacraments, signified by the wine and oil. He has set us upon His own beast, by bearing our sins in His own body upon the tree of the cross. He has brought us to the blessed inn of holy Church, where all graces and means of salvation are abundantly furnished to all who ask and seek for them. He has given charge of our souls to the keepers of this inn, that is, to His Apostles and their successors, the pastors of His Church, divinely commissioned and assisted by Him, and He has promised a most ample reward for all eternity to repay them for the care they shall take of us. What return shall we make to our Lord for all this mercy and love He has shown to us! He desires no other return but that we should love Him and show mercy to one another.

Conclusion. Make Him this return of love; but see it be with thy whole heart; for He will not accept a love that allows any creature to stand in competition with Him. See also thou never forget, that there is no loving Him without a sincere disposition of showing mercy to thy neighbour for His sake, and by His great example.

NOVEMBER 21.

On the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin.

1. Consider that the Church celebrates on this day, the early dedication which the Blessed Virgin made of herself to God and to His eternal love and service; when, as we learn from a pious tradition, she was presented by her holy parents, St. Joachim and St. Ann, in the temple of the Lord, and remained there in company with other Virgins in an apartment allotted for that purpose in one of the courts of the temple. Learn from this Presentation of the Blessed Virgin the great advantage of early piety, and the happiness of dedicating one's self, from childhood, to divine love; as also the duty incumbent on all parents to present their children to God; to keep them at a distance from the contagion of bad company, from the false maxims and corrupt ways of a wicked world; and to train them up in the love and fear of God. The Blessed Virgin was brought by Divine Inspiration to the house of God where she lived remote from the noise and distraction of the world; because she was to be the house where the Son of God Himself would be incarnate, and the living temple in which He would live. Christians, do you desire that your souls should be the house of God and the living temples of His glory? By withdrawing yourselves as much as possible from the tumult and confusion of the world; by continually presenting yourselves to God in His inward temple; by a spirit of recollection and mental prayer you will surely attain this happiness.

2. Consider in this Presentation of the Blessed Virgin; on the one hand, the voice of God calling her to His house in the words of the Psalm (xliv.), "Hear, O daughter, and see and incline thine ear, and forget thy people and thy father's house; and the king shall greatly desire thy beauty; for He is the Lord thy God, and Him they shall adore." And on the other hand, the devotion and fervour with which she corresponds with the call, the resolution with which she ascends the fifteen steps that lead to the temple; resolving to ascend in like manner by all the degrees of virtue to the summit of perfection; the profound adoration with which prostrating herself upon the ground, she adores His divine Majesty at her first coming into the house, and the oblation she there makes of her whole self to His perpetual service. Learn, Christian souls, the like correspondence with divine grace when it calls you to God; the like devotion, fervour, and resolution in His service; the like adoration and oblation of yourselves to Him. In this sacred retreat, the Blessed Virgin gave the first example of the consecration of herself to God, by a vow of perpetual virginity (as she was inspired to do by the Spirit of God), desiring in all things to choose the better part; and to render the sacrifice she made of her soul and body more perfect and secure, by means of her vow. Learn of her the love of purity and chastity, and the resolution of preserving it with all the perfection thy condition of life shall allow of, and for this end daily beg the assistance of her prayers.

3. Consider the exercises which the Blessed Virgin followed in the temple: for she certainly was not idle there. As the Holy Ghost continually visited her with His heavenly inspirations and graces, so she, who never received the grace of God in vain, continually opened the door of her heart to these visits, and co-operated with these graces with all her strength, and by these means every day of her life, as she increased in age, so she grew in virtue, grace, charity, and sanctity. And as to the employment of her time, whilst she was in the temple, her whole life there was spent in ascending or descending by the mystical ladder of Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 12), which reacheth from earth to heaven, and has God at the top of it. She ascended this ladder by employing a great part of her days in spiritual reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation, which are named by St. Bernard, the steps or degrees of this heavenly ladder. And she descended again by the humble exercise of working with her hands for the service of the temple, the use of her companions, or the benefit of the poor. Yet so, that even whilst her hands were employed at work, her heart was still with God by prayer and love. How holy, how happy is this kind of ascending and descending. Lord, give us grace to follow this great example; and to be always upon this ladder which conducts to heaven.

Conclusion. Imitate this Presentation of the Blessed Virgin by frequent oblations of thyself to God every day of thy life. Be cautious indeed how thou engagest thyself by vow, without taking good counsel and mature deliberation, because of thy frailty; but as to offering thy whole heart and soul to God, with all thy thoughts, words, and actions, it is what thou canst not do too often.

NOVEMBER 22.

On the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke xviii.)

1. Consider how our Lord spoke this parable. "Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee standing prayed thus with himself: O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this Publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess. And the Publican standing afar off would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven; but struck his breast, saying: O God, be merciful to me a sinner! I say to you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." This parable was spoken to some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others. Beware, my soul, of this unhappy disposition; dread these two pernicious evils of trusting in thyself as just and despising others. Those who are truly just are far from thinking themselves so; they are far from glorying in themselves; attributing anything of good to themselves, or preferring themselves before any one living; in the judgment they make of themselves they always sit down, according to the rule of their Master, in the lowest place. Their eyes are ever open to their own defects and shut to those of others; at least where duty does not require their inspection or correction of them. They are convinced that they have nothing in themselves they can trust to; and that it is owing only to God's mercy that they have not been guilty of crimes as great as those that any poor wretch has ever committed; and therefore they never presume to despise even the most scandalous sinner, lest they should be found worse than him in the sight of God, through pride and self-conceit: crimes which they know to be an abomination to the Lord. See, my soul, if these be thy sentiments!

2. Consider that pride and self-conceit are here condemned in the Pharisee. He was of the number of those that trusted in themselves as just, and despised others; he was full of himself. In his prayer he craved neither mercy nor grace from God: he

asked for nothing, because he took himself to be rich and wealthy, and not to stand in need of anything: whereas, through his pride he was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked (Apoc. iii. 17). His whole prayer was an enumeration of his good works, with a censure upon the rest of men, and a condemnation of the poor publican. And as he asked for nothing, so he obtained nothing, but only carried home with him his own condemnation. See, my soul, the sad consequences of pride, and its particular opposition to the spirit of prayer; and learn to detest with all thy power, and to drive far from thee an evil that is so detestable in the sight of God, whom it sacrilegiously robs of His glory, and so pernicious to the souls of men, whom it transforms into devils and condemns to hell.

3. Consider the lessons we are to learn from the example of the Publican in this parable. He had a true sense of his sins, and of what he had deserved for them; and therefore he condemned himself as unworthy to lift up his eyes to heaven, or to come near the altar of God: but standing afar off with his eyes humbly cast down upon the ground, he struck his breast, saying, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner!" Now this profound humility, this great sorrow and contrition for his sins which accompanied his prayer, procured him a favourable audience and a ready discharge from his sins. His prayer was heard, because it was presented and recommended by a contrite and humble heart, and by the efficacy of it he went home justified; whilst the proud Pharisee, who was so full of conceit in his own good works, met with nothing but condemnation. Let us learn these great lessons of humility, and of perfect contrition for our sins; let us as often as we go to the temple of God, carry with us this sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart; and we shall not fail of meeting with mercy, as the Publican did.

Conclusion. Study well these lessons so much recommended and so frequently inculcated by our Lord in the Gospel. Ever remember that humility and contrition of heart bring us to God; but pride and self-conceit carry us far away from Him. For "He resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble" (James iv. 16).

NOVEMBER 23.

On the Parable of the Grain of Mustard Seed (Matt. xiii. 31).

1. Consider that under this humble similitude of so small a thing as a grain of mustard seed, great and divine truths are delivered to us by Truth itself, when He tells us that the kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed. The kingdom of heaven, in the Gospel, is taken in three different ways; some-

times for God's eternal kingdom, to which the just are invited (Matt. xxv. 34), "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you," of which also it is said (Matt. xiii. 43), "The just shall shine, as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." At other times the kingdom of heaven is taken for the Church of Christ, in which He reigns for ever, as in His kingdom; the institution and intention of which is to bring men to heaven: and thus the kingdom of heaven is likened to "a net cast into the sea gathering together of all kinds of fishes" (Matt. xiii. 47). "And to ten virgins who went out with their lamps to meet the bridegroom" (Matt. xxv.), and of this kingdom it is said, that our Lord shall send His Angels (at the end of the world), and "they shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals and them that work iniquity; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire." At other times, again, the kingdom of heaven is taken for the kingdom where God reigns by faith, grace, and love, in the souls of good Christians: and thus "the kingdom of heaven is likened to a treasure hidden in a field;" and to "a pearl of great price" (Matt. xiii. 44, 46); and of this kingdom it is said (Luke xvii. 21), "Lo, the kingdom of God is within you." Now the kingdom of heaven, according to all three acceptations, is likened to a grain of mustard seed; because all our good, faith itself, grace, and our happiness both for time and eternity is grounded on humility; we must become "as little children, or we shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3).

2. Consider how well this similitude corresponds to the spiritual kingdom of Christ in His Church. Take a view of the beginning of this kingdom of heaven—in a few poor fishermen, utterly destitute of any of those advantages that might recommend them to the world; its very Founder Himself, a poor man, rejected, condemned, and put to a disgraceful death, by public authority, at the unanimous desire of both the senate and people of His own nation: then observe the principles and practices upon which this kingdom was founded and established; its doctrines shocking to human pride, its maxims and precepts insupportable to the natural inclinations of flesh and blood; and you shall find in all this the resemblance of the mustard seed; small, mean, inconsiderable and contemptible in the eyes of the world. But then observe how quickly this little grain, after it had been buried in the earth, sprung up and grew into a large tree which spread its branches far and near; by the wonderful progress the Church and kingdom of Christ made in a short time over all the earth; see the many thousands of Martyrs and other Saints of all states and conditions it quickly produces; with innumerable examples of most heroic virtue, such as none of the schools or sects of the philosophers, or any of the ancient or modern sages of the world, with all their learning and eloquence, and all their pretensions to wisdom, could ever come up to.

And in all this admire and adore the wonderful ways of God, who delights in showing forth His greatness in things that are little; in choosing the foolish things of the world, and such as are weak, mean, and contemptible in the eyes of the world to be the instruments of His greatest works.

3. Consider that this grain of mustard seed is also very expressive of the kingdom of God; in which He reigns by grace in our souls. The beginnings of this kingdom are small, like the mustard seed; the first foundation of it must be laid by humility, of which the mustard seed is an emblem; for a contrite and humble heart is the most essential ingredient in the conversion of the soul to God, without which the kingdom of divine grace can never be established in the soul. Then this divine grace, like the grain of mustard seed, before it can spring up and produce the tree of Christian perfection, must first be sown, and as it were buried in the earth, by letting it sink deep into the soul, and harbouring it there by means of serious and frequent meditation and the practice of mental prayer. For it is thus only that the soul can be qualified to grow up in Christian virtue, till she become herself the kingdom of God, and a kind of heaven upon earth; the temple in which God chooses to dwell; the house of God and the house of prayer. And thus the little grain of seed will grow into a great tree.

Conclusion. With a serious resolution seek henceforward in good earnest this kingdom of heaven, represented by the mustard seed which, as thou seest, is not out of thy reach; since it may be found here upon earth, without going any farther than thy own interior; where, if thou properly seek it by recollection and prayer, thou shalt quickly be put in possession of it; and all good things shall come to thee together with it.

NOVEMBER 24.

On the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. xxv.)

1. Consider that the ten virgins in this parable represent the state of Christians in this mortal pilgrimage. We are all, by our vocation to the Christian faith, appointed to go forth with our lamps to meet the Bridegroom: because the business of a Christian in this life is to make the best of his way, by help of the light of faith, towards God and a happy eternity; and to be always in readiness for the coming of Christ, the Bridegroom of our souls. The lamps with which we are to go forth to meet Christ are the light of faith in the Divine Truths of the Christian religion; the oil, with which these lamps are to be kept burning, are the works of faith, that is, good works prescribed by the Gospel, and particularly the works of mercy and charity, and the

love of God. Where this oil is wanting, the lamps are extinguished, because faith without good works is dead. And thrice unhappy they who, at the approach of that hour of their departure hence, when they shall be called upon, as in the middle of the night, to go forth to meet the Bridegroom, shall find no oil in their lamps! Alas! where shall they then go to buy it? In all appearance, before they shall be in a condition to procure any, the Bridegroom will come; and take with Him those whom He finds ready, to His wedding feast; and shut the door against the rest, never, never to be opened for all eternity.

2. Consider that all Christians belong to one or other of those two companies represented in this parable under the denomination of wise and foolish virgins. The good are truly wise, because they are wise according to God and they are wise in order to eternity, inasmuch as they provide for eternity. But how foolish are the wicked, and all the children of Babylon, who forget both God and eternity! For what greater folly or madness can there be, than to believe as Christians and to live as infidels; to expect to go to heaven by the road that leads to hell; to prefer darkness before light, slavery before liberty, misery before happiness, Satan before God; by preferring the state of sin, before the state of grace? In a word, what can be more foolish than blindly to exchange all that is good, both in time and eternity, for the very worst of evils, and such as shall never have an end? And yet, alas! as we daily see, the number of such fools as these is infinite. But the folly particularly censured in this parable, is that of Christians who make no provision of the oil of good works for the nourishment of their lamps; but go to meet their Lord in expectation of being admitted by Him to His eternal feast, with Christian faith, without Christian charity; believing in God without loving Him and keeping His commandments. My soul, take good care thou never be so foolish.

3. Consider that the great lesson designed for us in this parable is expressed in those words with which our Lord concludes, "Watch ye, therefore, because ye know not the day nor the hour." The Bridegroom in the parable came in the middle of the night, that is, when He was least expected; according to what He has often signified, that He shall come "like a thief in the night;" and that we shall not know the hour of His coming. Not that He desires to surprise us; for if He did He would not so often warn us: but that He desires we should always watch, and be ready, that so we may never be surprised. "What I say to you," said He to His disciples, "I say to all: Watch." And again; "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching; Amen, I say to you, that He will gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing He will minister to them" (Luke xii. 37). Who can express or conceive the greatness of these heavenly rewards, these

highest honours, these never-ending joys; signified by our Lord's ministering, in this manner, Himself, to the servants whom He shall find watching! But oh, the dismal case, on the other hand, of all who, instead of watching and being always ready, are asleep to all that relates to God and their souls; and are not awakened, either with the love or fear of God, till death opens their eyes, when it is too late, and then, like the foolish virgins, they find the door shut against them; and are sent away, with "I know you not," into the exterior darkness.

Conclusion. Bear always in mind this indispensable duty of watching, so frequently inculcated by the Son of God; that so thou mayest never be surprised, and sleep in death; carrying always with thee the lamp of faith to enlighten thee; but never forget that this light must be kept burning with the oil of good works.

NOVEMBER 25.

On the Parable of the Talents (*Matt. xxv.*)

1. Consider how our Lord in this parable likens Himself to a man going into a far country, who called his servants and delivered to them his goods: And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every one according to his proper ability: and immediately he took his journey. Our Lord, by His Ascension, is gone into heaven, a far country indeed from this wretched earth on which we dwell. But "ascending on high, He led captivity captive; He gave gifts to men" (Eph. iv. 1). He plentifully distributed His goods and talents amongst His servants; to the end that they might trade with them during the time of His absence, till He shall come again, and take an account of the good or evil management of their trust. He is the universal Lord of all: He distributes His talents amongst us according to His good pleasure. All we have, as to soul or body, nature or grace, belongs to Him. We have nothing but what we have received from Him: nor anything but what we are accountable for to Him. And those who have received more than their neighbours, have nothing to be proud of: for "what hast thou," says the Apostle (1 Cor. iv. 7), "that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory?" On the contrary, those who have received more, ought to be the more humble, and to fear the more: because they are accountable for so much: for where more is given, more will be required. Christians, have you been sensible of these truths! Have you considered your advantages of soul or body, your fortune, as you call it, your time, and other gifts either of nature or grace, as talents deposited in your hands? Have you ever seriously thought of the strict account you must one day give of them all?

2. Consider the different use these servants made of their master's money. For "he who had received five talents, went his way and traded with the same, and gained other five. And in like manner, he who had received two, gained other two. But he who had received one, going his way, digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money." The two former are proposed for our imitation; that by the like industry in corresponding with divine grace, and employing in a proper manner all the gifts of God, and embracing every opportunity of good, we may continually advance in virtue: and like these good and faithful servants improve and double our stock. How happy shall we be if we trade in this manner with the talents committed to our charge! and though one of these servants gained five talents, and the other but two; yet, as the latter who had received but two was no less industrious than the former; gaining as much in proportion as he had gained; we find him rewarded in like manner and the same eulogium given to him by his Master: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (ver. 23). What encouragement is here for those who have received few talents; since we see, if they make proper use of what they have received, they shall be rewarded equally with them that have received more! But oh, the sublime reward that is set before us in these words: "Enter into the joy of thy Lord!" For what is this joy of our Lord? Nothing less than the everlasting possession of Himself; a universal, incomprehensible, eternal Good.

3. Consider how he who buried his master's money is condemned as a slothful and wicked servant; as a warning to all such Christians as having received talents, that is, gifts, graces, or advantages of any kind from God, do not employ them to His greater honour and glory, or their own or their neighbour's improvement or advancement in good; but through sloth and indolence leave them unregarded, and as it were hidden and buried in the earth; even in this unhappy earth, the world, and the flesh, which engages all their thoughts and affections, more than the honour and glory of their Lord, or the eternal welfare of their own souls. But see where all this is likely soon to end, by the sentence pronounced against this idle servant: "Take away the talent from him, and give it to him that hath ten talents: for to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound; but from him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away. And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into exterior darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." But if the unprofitable servant come off so ill who only buried his master's money, what will become of so many thousands who do not content themselves with making no good use of the talents they are entrusted with, but squander them away, and even per-

vert and turn them against their Master by making them the instruments of sin? My soul, hast thou never been so unhappy?

Conclusion. Look well to thyself, by taking account of all the talents deposited in thy hands, and examine what use thou hast made of them to this day: to the end that if they have been hitherto either buried or abused, thou mayest now at least begin to employ them in such manner as may entitle thee to the approbation of thy great Master, rather than to be condemned as a wicked or slothful servant, to the eternal loss both of thy talents and thy soul.

NOVEMBER 26.

On the Parable of the Vineyard let out to Husbandmen (Matt. xxi. 33).

1. Consider what our Lord tells us: that "There was a certain householder who planted a vineyard, and made a hedge round about it and dug in it a winepress, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a strange country." The householder represents to us God Himself; and the vineyard His universal Church. But see, my soul, what care He has bestowed upon this vineyard; fencing it in with His excellent laws and perpetual protection as with a hedge; digging in it a wine-press, by the institution of His divine Sacraments, the sources of His heavenly grace, pressed out for us from the sacred wounds of our crucified Saviour; and building in it a tower, in which he might watch over it by His extraordinary Providence, as well to keep evil away from it as to provide it with all good. This vineyard He lets out to husbandmen; that is, to all men, inasmuch as He has given to all a part, or share, in which each one is to labour; to wit, his own soul, and the souls of as many others as He has committed to his charge. And having done this, He withdraws Himself, as it were, into a strange country; by keeping Himself out of our sight during the time of our mortal life, and patiently waiting for the fruit of His vineyard, which we are to furnish in due season. What lessons have we here, as well with regard to the goodness of God, on the one hand in all that He has done for His vineyard, and for every part of it, and consequently for every Christian soul; as with regard to our duty on the other hand, of corresponding with His goodness by our labours in producing and furnishing the fruit He expects.

2. Consider with regard to thyself, what this great Lord has done for the vineyard of thy soul in particular; by innumerable favours and graces of every kind which He has bestowed upon thee all thy life long till this very hour: and by many happy opportunities of doing good which He has afforded thee (and which

might have made thee a saint), beyond what He has granted to thousands of others. Then see if He may not say of thee, what He said heretofore of the vineyard of Jerusalem (Isa. v. 4), "What is there that I ought to do for My vineyard that I have not done to it?" But after all this care on His part, what fruit hast thou hitherto produced for Him? Alas! may He not justly complain of thee as He did of that Jewish vineyard, that instead of the good grapes which He looked for from thee, thou hast brought forth only wild grapes? Dread then what He threatens in consequence of being thus disappointed, in the words that immediately follow. "I will show you," said He, "what I will do to My vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall not be pruned, and it shall not be digged; but briars and thorns shall come up; and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it." Can anything be more terrible than these threats of the soul being thus abandoned, and given up to a reprobate sense, in punishment of bringing forth no good fruit, after so many repeated favours and graces.

3. Consider in this parable how the Lord of the vineyard sent, at different times, His servants to the husbandmen, to receive the fruits of it; but they persecuted them, and put them to death; till at length He sent His only Son, whom they used in like manner. In punishment, He brought these evil men to an evil end, and let out His vineyard to other husbandmen, who should render Him the fruit in due season. This was literally verified in the Jews, to whom the parable was addressed by our Lord, a few days before His Passion. God sent to them, at divers times, His servants the prophets, to call for the fruits of His vineyard; but they returned Him no fruits: they even persecuted His messengers, and put some of them to death. At length He sent them His only Son; and Him they cast off, condemned to death, and crucified. Therefore, as our Lord here foretells, the kingdom of God (that is, the vineyard of His Church) has been long ago taken away from them, to be given to a nation (that is, the Gentiles) that should bring forth the fruits thereof. But all this is applicable, more or less, to the particular vineyard of the soul of each Christian. Wherefore, as to thy own part, reflect how far thou hast imitated those unhappy husbandmen, in refusing to render to the Lord of thy vineyard, in due season, the fruits He has so often called for by His messengers; that is, by His preachers, His Word, His inspirations, reproaches of conscience, &c., and in persecuting those whom He sent to thee, by wilfully resisting His graces, stifling His inspirations, and setting at nought all who sought to bring thee to good. Alas! hast thou not by thy obstinacy in sin, as much as lay in thee, crucified again the Son of God? Take heed, lest if thou go on in this perversity, thou fall under the sentence, as the Jews did, of being brought to an

evil end ; and the kingdom of God be taken away from thee and given to another.

Conclusion. Look well to the vineyard of thy soul, that it may by correspondence with divine grace, bring forth its fruit in due season : even such as may be acceptable to the great Lord, who has let out His vineyard to thee, and who ceases not to furnish thee with all proper help to make it fruitful.

NOVEMBER 27.

On the merciful dealings of Christ our Lord with Sinners.

1. Consider how Christ our Lord, whilst He was visible upon earth, was pleased in a particular manner to show favour and mercy to poor sinners, and to express on all occasions His loving-kindness to them ; insomuch, that the Scribes and Pharisees (who being full of conceit of their own justice despised sinners, and kept them at a distance, saying, "Depart from me, come not near me, because thou art unclean," Isa. lxv. 5) were ever objecting to this merciful Lord, that He suffered sinners to draw near Him ; that He received sinners, and did eat with them ; that He was a friend to publicans and sinners. Unhappy men, who did not understand that His infinite mercy and charity had brought Him down from heaven on purpose to seek and to save sinners ! And still more unhappy, in proudly taking themselves to be just, and not sinners ; and therefore rejecting Him who came not to call the just, but sinners (Matt. ix. 13), vainly imagining they had no need of Him. Christians, see and admire, embrace and love, the great mercy of your Redeemer, and His tender compassion for poor sinners ; and how much soever you may be involved in sin, assure yourselves that He is ever ready to receive you ; if you will truly repent and return to Him. But beware of the blindness of the Pharisees, and of a vain opinion of your own justice ! For the first step towards obtaining mercy, must be a humble sense of your sins, and of the great need you have of mercy.

2. Consider the many instances recorded in the Gospel of this merciful disposition of Christ our Lord in favour of sinners. In calling them to Him (Matt. xi. 28), and even making them His disciples, as in the case of Matthew ; and frequently conversing most familiarly with them. To which add those remarkable examples of Magdalene (Luke vii.) ; of the Samaritan woman (John iv.) ; of the woman taken in adultery (John viii.) ; of the woman of Canaan (Matt. xv.) ; of Zacheus (Luke xix.) ; and of the thief upon the cross (Luke xxiii.). And as both in His life and at His death, so after His resurrection also He gave the like proofs of loving-kindness and tender mercy to sinners, in the

favour He showed both to Magdalene and to Peter by making them His first visits after His rising from the dead. What encouragements, my soul, for us to look for the like mercy from this same Lord who is as rich in mercy as ever! But then we must remember to go to Him with the like dispositions of faith and repentance, love and humility, as these happy penitents did; and to take care like them to return no more to our sins.

3. Consider the parables by which our Lord has shown to us, in a most lively manner, His infinite goodness and mercy to poor sinners; as for instance, that of the good shepherd (Luke xv.), who having lost one of his sheep leaves the rest of his flock, and goes in quest of that which is lost, and ceases not to seek it till he has found it, and when he has found it, lays it upon his shoulders with joy, and coming home calls together his friends and neighbours saying, Rejoice with me because I have found my sheep that was lost. In like manner that of the good Samaritan who showed such tender mercy to the man who had fallen among thieves; and that of the father who received so kindly and lovingly his ungracious son returning home to him. In all which, my soul, thou mayest see a lively image of that tender mercy, compassion, and goodness, which thy Redeemer has so often exercised, and continues to exercise in favour of sinners! What can He think too much, that He does for them for whom He shed even the last drop of His blood? Blessed be His mercy for ever, which is continually working such wonders for poor sinners! Ah, my soul, were it not for these wonders of His mercy, we should long since have dwelt in hell.

Conclusion. Lay hold of this mercy of thy Saviour, whilst thou hast time; by turning away from sin, from this very hour, and running to this Father of mercies, and dedicating thyself eternally to His service. For why shouldst thou any longer abuse His goodness and love, by obstinacy in sin; or run the risk of provoking His justice, to revenge upon thee the contempt of His mercy?

NOVEMBER 28.

On the Conversion of Zacheus (Luke xix.)

1. Consider how, when our Lord was walking through the city of Jericho, "there was a man named Zacheus, who was chief of the publicans, and he was rich; and he sought to see Jesus who He was, and he could not for the crowd, because he was low of stature. And he ran before and climbed up into a sycamore tree, that he might see Him, for He was to pass that way." See, Christians, the first step towards this wonderful conversion of a rich worldling; that is, of one of that sort of men usually most remote from the kingdom of God. 1. He desired to see Jesus, who He was.

Good desires are the first beginning of all our good : these incline us to seek to see Jesus and to come to Him by true wisdom, which consists in knowing what He is in Himself, and what He is in regard to us. Now the beginning of true wisdom, as we learn from the Spirit of God in the Scripture, is an earnest desire after it ; and this is seeking, like Zacheus, to see who Jesus is. 2. He was low of stature, and could not see Jesus for the crowd, and therefore he ran before and climbed up into a sycamore tree, that he might see Him ; for He was to pass that way. Alas ! poor sinners we also are low of stature, through our unhappy weakness and manifold miseries ; we are hindered from seeing Jesus by the crowd ; that is, by the distractions, worldly solicitudes, disorderly affections of our heart, and dissipation of thought, in which we live, and by the tumult of our passions ; and therefore in order to see and know Him, we must get out of the crowd, by retirement and recollection of thought ; we must run before, by disengagement of our heart from worldly affections ; we must climb up the sycamore by treading under foot the false maxims of worldly wisdom and human respect, and embracing the maxims of the Gospel, which the world calls foolishness. We must get above the heads of the worldly crowd, by climbing up the tree of the cross ; which the world despises and abhors, and then we shall be able to know Jesus and to contemplate Him : for that is the way by which He passes.

2. Consider that "when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said to him : Zacheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide in thy house. And he made haste and came down, and received Him with joy. And when they saw it, they murmured, saying that He was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner. See, Christians, how true that is of the wise man (Wisd. vi. 13, &c.), that wisdom is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her, and preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them. Our Lord not only suffers Himself to be seen by this publican, but He looks up at him ; He calls to him to make haste and come down to Him ; He even invites Himself into his house to be his guest, and brings salvation into that house. Oh the happy consequences of seeking to see and to know Jesus, and of getting out of the crowd, into the sycamore tree, to contemplate Him ! We must also learn from the example of Zacheus, a ready correspondence with the grace of our Lord when He looks up and calls ; we must not let Him go away, we must make haste and come down to Him without delay ; we must accept the favour of the visit He offers us with thankfulness ; we must conduct Him with joy into our inward house, we must make Him welcome by a proper entertainment of devotion and love ; thus will He bring salvation to our house.

3. Consider what entertainment Zacheus offered our Lord,

when he had received Him into his house : Behold, Lord, said he, half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him fourfold. He made a sacrifice upon the spot of his predominant passion, even of that love of the mammon of iniquity, which before had been his idol. He gave up at once his worldly riches, which were so near his heart, to be employed either in alms or in making restitution fourfold, for all ill-gotten goods. He laid down his sins at the feet of his Saviour with sincere detestation and repentance of them, and a firm resolution to return to them no more, but to make the best satisfaction he could for them. Now this was the most agreeable feast he could make for our Lord, who was pleased immediately to declare : "This day is salvation come to this house ; because he also is a son of Abraham, for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." What comfort was here for Zacheus ! What encouragement for us poor sinners, to imitate the readiness and sincerity of his conversion, that we may also with him be acknowledged for true sons of Abraham, by following the example of his faith, obedience, and sacrifice ; and that the like salvation may come to our house from Him who ever delights in seeking and saving that which was lost !

Conclusion. Consider the conversion of Zacheus as a model of a perfect conversion, and strive to imitate it in every part. Often invite Christ into thy house, and entertain Him there in spirit ; but see that thou make Him a proper feast, even as Zacheus did, by sacrificing to Him the dearest affections of thy heart ; and never let Him go without giving His blessing to thy house.

NOVEMBER 29.

On Christ weeping over Jerusalem (*Luke xix.*)

1. Consider how our Lord, coming for the last time to Jerusalem, a few days before His Passion ; when He drew near, seeing the city He wept over it, saying ; If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace ! but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee : and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee ; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone ; because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation. Our Lord in this last coming to Jerusalem is accompanied by crowds of people, bearing branches of palm in their hands, and welcoming Him with Hosannahs of joy : but His attention is engaged by the sight of that unhappy city, and the knowledge of the evils that are coming upon it, which He bewails in this pathetic manner.

Not that the beating down of stone walls, or the destruction of houses, was a matter worthy of the tears of the Son of God; nor yet that men, who are all doomed to die, should die a little before their time; but the miseries which He lamented were of another kind, the blindness and hardness of heart of the inhabitants of this city so highly favoured by His visits; their extreme ingratitude and obstinacy in sin; and that final reprobation and eternal damnation, which they were drawing down upon their own heads, by the repeated abuse of and wilful resistance to those extraordinary graces which He offered them at this time of their visitation. Christians, beware lest the like abuse of divine grace should draw down judgments on you also.

2. Consider that you have at present your day, as Jerusalem had then. This is your day; a time of mercy and grace in which the Son of God visits you by many gracious calls and inspirations. His sacraments and sacrifice, the fountains of your Saviour are continually open for you, together with all manner of helps for your salvation. But what use do you make of this your day? for it is short and will quickly be at an end; and then the day of the Lord must take place. Have you a right sense and knowledge in this your day of the things that are for your peace and for your true welfare? Do the things of God and eternity make a real impression on your soul? Is the conduct of your life regulated by them? Or, are not these great truths, through your own fault, hidden from your eyes? Take care lest you pass this time of your visitation as Jerusalem did, and the days suddenly come upon you also, when your spiritual enemies shall cast a trench about you, and straiten you on every side, and beat you flat to the ground, when the sorrows of death shall encompass you, and the perils of hell shall find you; and the grace of God, which you have so long abused, shall depart, and leave you in the hands of your enemies.

3. Consider how our Saviour, after weeping over Jerusalem and announcing its final desolation, entering into the temple, began to cast out them that sold therein and them that bought, saying to them, "It is written, My house is a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves" (Luke xix. 45). Giving us to understand, by this, that the profanation of the house of God and of sacred things, the love of gain more than of holiness, and the neglect of prayer and other religious duties, is the high road to blindness of spirit and hardness of heart, and consequently to a dreadful and eternal reprobation. Christians, take care lest, imitating in these particulars the guilt of the Jews, you draw upon your heads the like punishments. The soul of every Christian ought to be the temple of the living God (2 Cor. vi. 16), and in that quality the house of prayer. Take care you never be so unhappy as turn this house of prayer into a den of thieves, by shutting out the fear and love of God, and letting in sin and Satan.

Conclusion. Attend in this your day to the things that are to your peace, and neglect not the time of your visitation ; lest, by a want of correspondence with grace, you be so unhappy as to fill up the measure of your sins, and suddenly to fall, when you least expect it, into the hands of the living God.

NOVEMBER 30.

On St. Andrew.

1. Consider the lessons we are to learn from the example of this great saint. St. Andrew, before he came to Christ, was a disciple of St. John the Baptist (John i. 35, 43), trained up to devotion and penance in that excellent school of the great forerunner of our Lord. See, my soul, the advantages of early piety and of a saint-like education ! "It is good for man," saith the prophet, "when he hath borne the yoke from his youth" (Lam. iii. 27.) And it is a proverb, saith Solomon (Prov. xxii. 6), "Train a young man according to his way : even when he is old, he will not depart from it." St. John, the true friend of the Bridegroom, who sought not his own honour and glory, but the spiritual advantage of his disciples, directed them to Jesus. St. Andrew and another heard him saying of our Lord, "Behold the Lamb of God !" and they presently followed Him, accompanied Him to the place of His abode, and stayed with Him that day. What a welcome did He not give them ! What heavenly conversation did they not there enjoy ! Christians, see you make ready a lodging for Christ in your interior, and invite Him thither, and entertain Him there by the exercise of recollection and mental prayer ; and you also may be so happy as to relish the admirable sweetness of His divine conversation.

2. Consider that St. Andrew had no sooner found Christ himself, than he endeavoured to impart the same happiness to his brother Simon, and forthwith brought him to our Lord. Happy they who, having found Jesus and relished His sweetness, endeavour, like St. Andrew, to bring their brethren to Him ! According to that of the Scripture (Apoc. xiii. 17), "Let him that heareth, say, Come," *i.e.*, let him that heareth the sweet voice and invitation of the Spirit of God in his own soul calling him to Christ, invite as many others as he can, and bring them with him. But though these two brothers had begun to be acquainted with our Lord and to believe in Him, they had not as yet left all to follow Him. This grace was reserved for another time, when, as we read (Matt. iv. 18), "Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishermen), and He saith to them ; Come after Me, and I will

make you to be fishers of men; and they immediately leaving their nets followed Him." Learn, Christians, from this example, a ready correspondence with the calls and graces of God: even though He should call upon you to leave all you possess to follow Him; how much more when He calls for a much easier sacrifice; such as giving up for the love of Him some petty toy or worldly bauble which has taken possession of your heart. Alas! the affections to fooleries are like nets from which you must be disengaged before you can truly follow Christ.

3. Consider that from this time St. Andrew kept close to our Lord as His companion and disciple; and after His Ascension into heaven, employed his whole life in propagating by his labours, preaching, and miracles, the glory of his Master's name and His blessed kingdom; and in procuring salvation to innumerable souls. Neither did he cease till, after many sufferings and tribulations (the usual portion of the disciples of Christ), he laid down his life for love of his Lord, following Him faithfully unto death, even the death of the cross. But with what affection did he not salute the cross prepared for him; when, according to the acts of his martyrdom, coming within sight of that happy instrument which was to send him to his God, he cried out: O good cross, which has received beauty and glory from bearing the body of my Lord! O Cross! which I have long desired, tenderly loved, and continually sought after, and which now at length art here prepared to satisfy my longing soul, receive me now into thy embraces; take me away from amongst mortals, and conduct me to my Master; that through thee He may receive me, who redeemed me by dying on thee. Christians, what are your dispositions in regard to the cross prepared for you? There is no going to heaven by any other way than that of the cross. Are you convinced of this? Do you, like St. Andrew, lovingly embrace this blessed instrument which is to bring you to your God and to a happy eternity? Two considerations in particular recommended the cross to St. Andrew, for the object of his affection and love; viz., the example of his Master, who had sanctified the cross by His own sufferings and death; and its being the means by divine appointment to bring him to his Master, and unite him eternally to Him. Let the like considerations recommend the cross to your love and affection.

Conclusion. Labour to imitate the virtues of St. Andrew, especially his early piety, his attention to the divine call, his ready correspondence with the grace of God, his constant fidelity to Christ, his dedicating his life to His love and service; and the pious dispositions of his soul with relation to the cross. There is no better way of honouring the saints than imitation of their lives.

DECEMBER 1.

Of the time of Advent.

1. Consider that the time of Advent, or the coming of Christ, is a penitential time and a time of devotion, in which we are called upon by the Church to prepare the way of the Lord, to make straight His paths: to enter into the dispositions which St. John the Baptist required of the people when he was sent to preach to them conversion and penance, in order to prepare them for the Messias; that so we also, by turning away from our sins by sorrow and repentance, and turning ourselves to the Lord our God with our whole heart, may dispose our souls to welcome our Saviour, whose birth we are about to celebrate; and to embrace in such manner the mercy and grace He brought with Him at His first coming, as to escape hereafter those dreadful judgments which His justice shall execute upon impenitent sinners at His second coming. See, then, my soul, that thou dedicate this holy time to suitable exercises of devotion and penance that thou mayest answer the end of this institution.

2. Consider in what manner we are summoned by the Church, at the beginning of this holy time (in the words of St. Paul, Rom. xiii. 11, read in the epistle of the first Sunday in Advent), to dispose ourselves for Christ. "Knowing the time," says the Apostle, "that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is past, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light: let us walk decently as in the day." Let us consider these words as addressed to us, in order to awaken us and stir us up to begin a new life. Alas! have we not hitherto been asleep, as to the greatest of all our concerns? Are not the greater part of Christians asleep, by their unaccountable indolence in the salvation of their souls. Are they not sleeping, too, in the midst of dangers and of mortal enemies who are continually plotting their destruction, and even upon the brink of a precipice which, if they fall down, will let them in a moment into hell? Let us then hearken seriously to this summons, and rouse ourselves, whilst we have time, out of this unhappy lethargy; and from this hour apply ourselves in good earnest to that only business for which we came into this world. Let us cast off, now and for ever, the works of darkness, and put on Jesus Christ!

3. Consider that on the first Sunday of Advent the terrors of God's justice are set before our eyes, in the description given in the gospel of the great accounting day; to the end, that they who will not correspond with the sweet invitations of God's mercy and awake from sleep at the summons addressed to them in the

epistle, may be roused at least by the thunder of His justice, announced in the gospel, and be induced, by wholesome fear of the dreadful judgments that continually hang over the heads of impenitent sinners, to make good use of this time of mercy, lest hereafter there should be neither time nor mercy for them. Ah! sinners, if this day you hear the voice of the Lord either sweetly inviting you with the allurements of His mercy, or terrifying you with the threats of His judgments, see you harden not your hearts. Sleep on no longer, lest you sleep in death: as it happened to them of old, who refusing to hearken to God's voice, provoked Him so far, that He swore to them in His wrath that they should never enter into His rest. Remember that the day of the Lord and His judgments shall come as a snare upon all them that will not watch (Luke xxi. 55).

Conclusion. Enter now into the spirit of this holy time, which is a penitential spirit; and prepare the way of the Lord by putting away thy sins and purifying thy soul for Him; thus shalt thou welcome Him at His coming, and shalt be welcome to Him.

DECEMBER 2.

On what we must do to prepare the way of the Lord.

1. Consider that the Church, in the office appointed for this holy time, frequently puts us in mind of the mission and preaching of St. John the Baptist, and of the manner in which he endeavoured to prepare the people for Christ; to the end that we may learn, from the doctrine of this great forerunner of our Lord, in what dispositions we ought also to be if we would duly prepare the way for Him. What the Baptist continually preached to the people was: That they should turn from their evil ways, and do penance, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand; that they should bring forth fruits worthy of penance, if they would escape the wrath to come; and this without delay: for that now the axe was laid at the root of the tree, and that every tree that did not bring forth good fruit should be cut down and cast into the fire. That they should not flatter themselves with the hope of impunity or security because they had Abraham for their father; for that God was able to raise up from the very stones children to Abraham; and therefore without a thorough conversion from their sins, they were to expect that the kingdom of God, and the grace and dignity of children of Abraham, should be taken from them and given to the Gentiles. He added, that he baptized them indeed with water unto penance; but that another should come after him, who should "baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire; that His fan was in His hand, and that He should thoroughly cleanse His floor and gather His wheat into

the barn ; but the chaff He would burn with unquenchable fire." (Matt. iii). This was the way St. John prepared the people for Christ ; and it is by conforming ourselves in practice to his lessons at this holy time, we also must prepare the way of the Lord, and be prepared for Him.

2. Consider that the great theme of the preaching of St. John, to prepare the way of the Lord, was the virtue of penance : inasmuch as this was the only means by which sinners could ever be reconciled to God after actual mortal sin ; and therefore this theme was at all times inculcated by all who were sent with commission from God to reclaim unhappy souls that had gone astray from Him. By this virtue of penance we also must prepare the way of the Lord at this holy time : this is the proper devotion for the time of Advent. Penance, which always was, is, and always will be necessary for bringing back sinners to God, implies three things : first, to renounce all our sins by which we have offended so good a God : secondly, to turn ourselves to God with our whole heart, and dedicate ourselves to Him for time and eternity ; and thirdly, to offer ourselves to Him to make what satisfaction we can for our past offences by a penitential life. Christians, this is our great business at this holy time, if we hope to prepare ourselves for Christ ; to recall, in the bitterness of our soul, all our years that have been spent in sin ; to bewail and lament every day of this holy season, our past treasons against the divine Majesty ; to turn to God with our whole heart ; to offer our souls to Him, to exercise ourselves in His love, and to enter into a new promise of eternal allegiance, with a full determination of rather dying than being any more disloyal to Him, and letting no day pass without offering Him some penitential satisfaction for our past guilt ; to be united to and sanctified by the Passion and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Happy are they who employ the time of Advent in this manner ! How willingly will our Lord at the approaching Christmas communicate Himself to such souls as these !

3. Consider that at the approaching solemnity of Christmas, the Church, by thrice celebrating the sacred mysteries on the same day, commemorates three different births of Christ : His eternal birth from His father ; His temporal birth from His mother ; and His spiritual birth by which He is born by grace in our souls. Hence the best devotion for the time of Christmas is that which conduces the most to bring Christ into our souls by this spiritual birth : and consequently the best devotion for the time of Advent, is to cleanse and purify our souls that He may find nothing to hinder Him from coming to be spiritually born in us ; for He will never come into an unclean soul, nor be born in a mansion where Satan resides. See, then, what measures thou art to take, at this holy time, to prepare thy inward house for the spiritual birth of this King of glory. 1. Thou must cleanse and

purify it from sin and Satan. 2. Thou must adorn it with virtue and piety; and 3. Thou must daily invite thy Lord thither by fervent prayer: thus shalt thou prepare the way of the Lord in the manner that is best pleasing to Him.

Conclusion. Put in practice all these lessons to the best of thy power at this holy time. An Advent spent in this manner, in devotion and penance, cannot fail of bringing thee a happy Christmas.

DECEMBER 3.

On the miracles of Christ our Lord.

1. Consider that Christ our Lord did not only teach us His heavenly truths by His preaching, His parables, and His maxims laid down in the Gospel; but His whole life, and all His actions were designed to be an instruction to us; and that His miracles in particular were wrought not only to confirm our faith and our hope in Him, and to be so many evidences of His goodness and charity to poor mortals; but to give us also lessons for our practice, if we would take pains to look well into them, and learn the mystical meaning of them. Especially, we must remember that as the diseases and corporal infirmities we are liable to in this life mystically represent the spiritual maladies of our vices and passions, so we are to learn from the miracles wrought by our Redeemer, in healing all manner of diseases of the body, to apply to Him for the cure of the like diseases in the soul, which are indeed the more grievous evils of the two; and if not healed, are attended with far more dreadful consequences. But alas! how seldom do the children of this world seek the cure of their spiritual diseases, or apply in a proper manner to this great Physician for His aid—who, when He was upon earth, never rejected any that applied to Him? So much more are worldlings concerned for the body than for the soul, for time than for eternity. My soul, let us at least be more wise.

2. Consider what were the miracles our Saviour more frequently wrought from the time of His beginning to preach His Gospel? "He went about Galilee," says St. Matthew, "healing all manner of sickness and diseases among the people; and His fame went throughout all Syria, and they brought to Him sick people and such as were possessed by devils, and lunatics, and paralytics, and He healed them" (Matt. iv. 23). "And there came to Him great multitudes, having with them the dumb, the blind, the lame, the maimed, and many others: and they cast them down at His feet, and He healed them" (Matt. xv. 30). "And whithersoever He entered into towns, or into villages or cities, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might but touch the hem of His garment, and as many as touched

Him were made whole" (Mark vi. 56). "And all the multitude sought to touch Him, for virtue went out from Him and healed all" (Luke vi. 19). See, Christians, how ready your Lord was to cure all kinds of bodily diseases, and how beneficial it was to come near Him, or to touch Him or His garments. Assure yourselves and He is no less ready or willing now to heal your souls; for His power, His mercy, His goodness, and His charity for you know no bounds! It is in no way diminished, since He shed His blood for you, and carried it with Him into the sanctuary of heaven, to present it to His Father in your behalf. Examine, then, what your diseases are, and run with confidence to Him for your cure. You need not go far to seek Him, for though He is gone to heaven, He still will be with you even to the end of the world. You may find Him in the Eucharist; where a virtue continually goes out from Him for healing all; you may find Him at any time and in any place in His divine Person; especially in His temple, in the centre of your souls; for there is no place in which He either more willingly resides, or more frequently works His wonders than in the interior of such Christians as duly seek Him by a spirit of recollection and an interior life.

3. Consider that Christ our Lord continually went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil (Acts. x. 38). As He came to deliver men from the tyranny and slavery of the devil; so His miracles were most frequently wrought in casting out devils, in destroying the works of the devil, and in forcing Satan out of his usurped dominions. See, Christians, what occasion your souls may have for this sort of miracle. Are they not spiritually possessed, or besieged by this wicked spirit by means of some or other of the capital sins; for where any of these are predominant, there Satan reigns. Does not this wicked one render you spiritually deaf and dumb to the voice of God and the confession of your sins? Does he not bend you down to the earth by worldly affections, like the crooked woman in the Gospel (Luke xiii. 16). Does he not make you blind, by obstructing your interior sight with regard to the light of truth? In all these cases you must run to Christ our Lord to be delivered from this mortal enemy of your souls. Christ's hand is not shortened; He will cast out this wicked one at your humble request; but take care not to be of the number of those who, by giving themselves up to their carnal passions, are rather swine than Christians: for of such as these the devil has so great a hold, that he will not easily be cast out. Our Lord Himself gave licence to a whole legion of devils to enter into swine, and whither did they hurry them, but down a precipice into the deep, where they all perished? Take care this never be your case!

Conclusion. Consider henceforward the miracles of our Lord not only as confirmations of the truth of the Christian faith, and

evidences of the power, mercy, and goodness of the Author of it; and consequently as strong inducements to believe in Him, hope in Him, and love Him above all things; but also study well the practical lessons which are to be learnt from these miracles; inasmuch as they point out to us the sovereign means of ridding ourselves of all our evils, by having recourse with lively faith and humble prayer to the great Source of all our good.

DECEMBER 4.

On our Lord cleansing the Lepers.

1. Consider that cleansing the lepers is one of those miracles of our Lord which is more particularly instructive; because leprosy was an emblem or figure of sin. Hence we find so many prescriptions in the Levitical law (Lev. xiii. and xiv.) with regard to such as had contracted leprosy; and the judgment that was to be made of them by the priests, to whose inspection they were committed by the law, and the rites and sacrifices by which they were to be cleansed; which were all figurative and expressive of what was to be done by, or for, those who had contracted the spiritual leprosy of sin. The first mentioned as cleansed by our Lord of his leprosy, was he who came (Matt. viii. 2, 3) and worshipped Him, saying: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I will: be thou made clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." See, Christians, by this example, in what manner you are to apply to your Lord if you desire to be cleansed of your spiritual leprosy. See with what strong and lively faith, accompanied with profound humility, this leper presents himself before our Saviour; and learn to imitate Him. Faith and humility are very efficacious with your heavenly Physician. It was appointed (Lev. xiii. 44), that whosoever was defiled with the leprosy, and separated by the judgment of the priest, should keep at a distance from the rest of the faithful: and should both by his outward habit and the cry of his voice declare that he was defiled and unclean, to signify the humble dispositions which are necessary in the case of spiritual leprosy before we can expect to meet with a cure.

2. Consider how our Lord, having cleansed the leper—to teach us to avoid ostentation and vainglory in doing good—said to him: See thou tell no man: but go, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony to him. Our Lord sent those whom He cleansed from leprosy to the priests, to conform to the prescription of the law of Moses; and at the same time to give us to understand that even when, by the grace of perfect contrition, He cleanses souls from the leprosy of sin,

He still expects that they should show themselves to His priests, by a sincere confession of their sins; in consequence of His divine Law, by which He has given to His priests the inspection and judgment of the leprosy of the soul; with the power of binding and loosing, forgiving and retaining sins; and the dispensation of the other sacraments. The person cleansed from leprosy and sent to the priest was ordered to offer the gift which Moses commanded, and consequently to observe the other prescriptions of the law (Lev. xii.) He was, in order to his purification, to be sprinkled seven times with the blood of a bird, immolated over living waters, he was to wash his clothes, he was to shave his hair, and to be washed himself with water; and then after seven days he was to offer a burnt offering and a sin offering; and to be fully cleansed and expiated by the blood of the lamb offered for sin, and by the oil of the sacrifice that had been sprinkled seven times before the Lord; to signify to us, by these mysterious ceremonies, that such as desire to be thoroughly cleansed from the spiritual leprosy of sin; must by repeatedly washing their consciences with the waters of compunction, by frequently sprinkling their souls with the blood of the Lamb of God and by applying to them the unction of the sevenfold grace of the Holy Ghost, attain to this perfect purification.

3. Consider what we read (Luke xvii.) of ten other lepers who applied to our Lord for their cure: "They stood afar off; and lifted up their voices, saying: Jesus, master, have mercy on us. And when He saw them, He said, Go show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass that as they went they were cleansed." See, how quickly thy Lord is moved to show mercy to those who, with a loud cry, call for mercy; that is, with fervent prayer, joined with profound humility and a true sense of their own misery and unworthiness; expressed in the case of these men by their standing afar off, as not daring to come nearer to our Lord by reason of their uncleanness. Let us learn to apply to our Saviour for the cure of our spiritual leprosy with the like fervour and humility! But mark also what follows: "And one of them when he saw that he was cleansed, went back, and with a loud voice glorified God: and he fell on his face before His feet, giving thanks; and this man was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten made clean? and where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God but this stranger." Christians, let us learn by this example the sentiments of love and gratitude, devotion and humility, with which we ought to praise and glorify God after being cleansed by His mercy, from the unhappy leprosy of sin; the great value we ought to set upon the grace of our purification and reconciliation to His divine Majesty; and the care we ought to take never more to incur this worst of all uncleanness. Alas! where these sentiments are wanting in penitents, it is much to be appre-

hended, that they are not far off from relapsing into their former leprosy, and in a worse degree than before.

Conclusion. Dread the spiritual leprosy of sin more than any other evil. But if at any time you have reason to apprehend that you have incurred this dreadful uncleanness, learn from the foregoing considerations to whom and in what manner you are to apply for your cure ; and how you are to behave after having found this mercy.

DECEMBER 5.

On our Lord stilling the Storm at Sea ; and feeding the Multitude.

1. Consider the lessons we are to learn from the miracle of Christ's stilling the storm at sea by His word (Matt. viii. 23, &c.) : "He entered into a ship, and His disciples followed Him. And behold a great storm arose at sea, so that the ship was covered with the waves ; but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him, and awakened Him, saying, Lord save us : we perish. And Jesus said to them : Why are you fearful, Oh ye of little faith ? Then rising up, He commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm." Christians, we are all embarked, as it were, in a ship, during our mortal life, in order to sail towards the haven of a blessed eternity. And for our comfort we have on board with us not only the disciples of Christ, that is, the pastors of the Church, the successors of the Apostles, but also our Lord Himself, according to His promise (Matt. xxviii. 20). "Lo ! I am with you all days, even to the end of the world." In this voyage we are often exposed to storms which threaten sometimes the whole Church : as in cases of grievous persecutions, heresies, or other more general evils ; at other times endanger individuals, as in cases of temptations and tribulations ; from which, more or less, no one can expect to be exempted in the midst of the winds and waves of the boisterous ocean of this world. But we have Christ on board with us ; and therefore have nothing to fear, if we will but have recourse to Him with lively faith and confidence. And although He oftentimes seems to sleep, and defers His aid for trial of our faith, and to make us more sensible of our necessity and more earnest in praying to Him, He will not fail, in His good time, to rise up to command the winds and the sea, and restore calm.

2. Consider the lessons we are also to learn from the miracles of our Saviour's feeding at one time five thousand men with five loaves, and at another time four thousand with seven loaves. Our Lord Himself has taught us, upon occasion of the former of these miracles (John vi. 26, 27), that we are not to seek or to follow Him for the sake of the loaves ; that is, for corporal live-

lihood or any temporal advantage ; for this would be but catching at the shadow and losing the substance : that "we are not to labour for the meat that perisheth ; but for that," said He, "which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man will give you." So that the great lesson He would have us learn from His feeding the multitudes is, that we should have recourse to Him for the food and nourishment of our souls unto everlasting life, for He is the living and life-giving bread which, without consumption or diminution, He distributes to all who come to Him seeking the refreshment of their souls, either by communicating Himself to them really in the Holy Sacrament, or spiritually by a communion of faith and love.

3. Consider in the miracles of our Lord's feeding the multitudes, what other lessons may be learnt from the circumstances in which He wrought these wonders. "I have compassion," said He, "on the multitude : for, behold, they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat : and if I send them away fasting to their homes, they will faint on the way, for some of them came from afar off" (Mark viii. 2, 3). The people whom He favoured with these miracles had followed Him into the desert ; they had preferred attending upon Him and hearing His divine word before all other occupation or recreation : they had continued with Him for three whole days without taking any thought for their bodily nourishment ; and therefore our Lord, after feeding their souls with the Word of Life, and healing all who stood in need of cure, was pleased to provide also for their corporal sustenance, according to what He promised (Matt. vi. 33): "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." Learn hence, Christians, what wonders your Saviour is disposed to work in favour of those who follow Him into the wilderness by a spiritual retreat, that is, by retiring from the noise and hurry of the world to attend upon Him ; who are not quickly wearied with His company, but continue diligently with Him, notwithstanding the difficulties and opposition they meet with from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and gladly hearken to His divine word. Such as these will not fail of being refreshed by Him.

Conclusion. Follow Christ into the wilderness by making at least a little wilderness for Him in thy own soul, and there frequently attending upon Him by recollection and mental prayer ; and assure thyself that He will never send thee away fasting, but will have compassion on thee, and frequently feed thee with His hidden manna, lest thou faint in the way ; for thou hast yet a great way to go before thou canst reach thy eternal home.

DECEMBER 6.

On the Lessons that are to be learned from other Miracles of our Lord.

1. Consider that the miracles of our Lord were generally wrought in favour of such as applied to Him with lively faith and profound humility, or by means of earnest prayer; to teach us the great efficacy of faith, humility, and fervent prayer; and to encourage us to seek the cure of our souls, with the like dispositions. Thus the woman who had laboured for twelve years under the issue of blood, humbly coming behind our Lord in the crowd and touching the hem of His garment, was instantly healed in reward of her faith, as our Lord Himself assured her (Luke viii. 48). The centurion, by his faith and humility, obtained of our Lord the immediate cure of his servant by these words: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof: speak only the word, and my servant shall be healed" (Matt. viii. 8). Thus the woman of Canaan, by her pious importunity, accompanied with the like faith and humility, obtained the cure of her daughter (Matt. xv. 28). And so in many other cases. At other times, those who only presented themselves before our Saviour, without presuming either to touch Him or His garments, or even to speak to Him: by the silent eloquence of their humility obtained their cure: as in the case of the man who had the dropsy (Luke xiv.) Let us learn this kind of eloquence!

2. Consider the lessons we may learn from the miraculous cure of the paralytic (Matt. ix. and Luke v.) Our Lord was teaching in a house, surrounded with a great crowd of people, so that there was no coming in through the door; when, behold, men brought on a bed a man who had the palsy, desiring to present him before Him; but not finding by what way they might bring him in, because of the multitude, they went upon the roof of the house, and uncovering it, let him down through the tiles, with his bed, into the midst, before Jesus. See what pains were taken by these men to get at the heavenly Physician, from whom they expected the cure of their friend. Who would have thought of going up to the roof of another person's house and uncovering it, and letting down a sick man on a bed over the heads of a crowd? Nothing but strong faith on the one hand, and earnest desire of a cure on the other, could have suggested such an extraordinary proceeding, which loudly condemns the indolence or indifference of so many Christians nowadays, who lying ill of a spiritual palsy which disables them, and threatens them with everlasting death, yet suffer themselves to be kept away from Christ by every trifling obstacle or apprehension of difficulty. Christians, where

is your faith? Where your concern for eternity? Why will you not be more solicitous about the health and welfare of your immortal souls than about worldly toys, or those carcasses of yours that must quickly be the food of worms?

3. Consider how our Lord, upon this occasion, was pleased to begin the cure of the sick man, by healing his soul from sin: Son, said He, thy sins are forgiven thee: to give us to understand, that corporal maladies are often sent in punishment of our sins: and that the first thing we have to do when visited with sickness, is to apply for the remission of our sins by repentance and confession: and then we may expect that the scourge may be relieved when the cause is removed. The Scribes and Pharisees took occasion from those words of our Saviour to charge Him with blasphemy in their minds: but He who knew their secret thoughts publicly confuted them by working so great and evident a miracle, in proof of His power of forgiving sins, as to restore upon the spot both health and strength to the man sick of the palsy with only these words: "Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house." Upon which the paralytic, "immediately rising, took up the bed on which he had lain and went away to his own house, glorifying God." Thou too hast a Physician in the person of thy Redeemer, who is both able and willing to heal thy infirmities; but He expects of all such as apply to Him for their cure that they should no longer lie on their beds, by continuing in habits or immediate occasions of sin; but that they should arise without delay and take up their beds, by bearing with courage the labours and conflicts of a penitential life; and make the best of their way, by exercises of solid virtue, to their true home; glorifying as they go, both by their words and their lives, their great Deliverer.

Conclusion. Spare no pains to come to Christ in order to be healed by Him of thy spiritual diseases; but remember to carry with thee lively faith and profound humility; these will not fail of introducing thee to Him, and obtaining of Him all thou desirest.

DECEMBER 7.

On our Lord giving Sight to the Blind, and raising the Dead to Life.

1. Consider that our Lord, during His mortal life, often restored sight to them that were corporally blind; but oftener by far both then and since, has by His great mercy opened the eyes of them that were spiritually blind to see the light of God and His eternal truths. He gave sight to him that was born blind (John ix.), by spreading clay upon his eyes and ordering him to

wash in the pool of Siloe (which is interpreted Sent) ; to instruct us that we who, according to the soul, are all born blind by original sin, must have our eyes opened to the light of truth by the application of this mystical clay, of self-knowledge to our inward eyes ; and by being washed in Him who was sent from God to be the true light of the world. In the supplication we make to Him, for obtaining this divine light, we must, like the blind men of Jericho, show ourselves to be in earnest, by the fervour and importunity of our prayer ; and not be discouraged by the opposition we meet with from the crowd of distractions that rebukes us, as it were, and seeks to stop our mouths, but cry out so much the more for mercy, even as they did (Matt. xx. 31) ; and our Lord will not fail to show us the mercy we ask, and enlighten the eyes of our souls.

2. Consider that in the Gospel we read of three whom our Saviour raised from death to life ; one was the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, a girl of twelve years old ; another was a young man, the son of a widow of the city of Naim ; the third was Lazarus of Bethania, the brother of Martha and Mary. The first was but just dead ; and was raised to life by our Lord with two words : "Talitha cumi ;" that is, Girl, arise. The second was carried out in order to be buried ; and for raising him to life, something more was done ; for our Lord came near, and touched the bier, and stopped them that carried it ; and said, "Young man, I say to thee, arise ; and he that was dead sat up and began to speak." But Lazarus had been dead and buried four days ; and before our Lord restored him to life, we read (John xi.), that "He groaned in the spirit, and troubled Himself," that He went to the sepulchre and wept ; that He "groaned again in Himself," and ordered the stone to be taken away ; that "He lifted up His eyes to heaven and prayed to His Father, and cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." The first of these represents such souls as have but just now fallen into sin ; who by a timely and fervent application to our Lord, who alone can raise the dead to life, may more easily be recovered from the jaws of death and hell, and brought back to the life of grace. The second represents such souls as are not only fallen into the death of sin ; but are already laid upon the bier, and carried towards the sepulchre of a sinful habit, by repeated acts of sin. For raising such to life stronger graces are required ; signified by our Lord's touching the bier and causing the bearers of it, that is the criminal passions which are hurrying the poor sinner to his grave, to stand still. But Lazarus represents the more dismal condition of such as are already buried in inveterate habits of mortal sin ; whose case requires still more extraordinary graces, signified by tears, groans, prayers, and the loud cry of the Son of God. Christians, let us dread the death of sin above all other evils ; but much more being buried in the grave of sinful habits ;

from which we shall not be raised without a greater miracle, than even that by which Lazarus was called out of his monument. And who shall dare to be so presumptuous as to go on in sin, flattering himself with the expectation of such a miracle being wrought in his favour?

3. Consider, that in these miracles wrought by our Lord in raising the dead to life, we find that He was moved by the tears of the living, as in the case of the widow's son and of Lazarus, to encourage us to present to Him our prayers and tears for poor sinners dead and buried in sin; with humble confidence that in His great mercy He will have pity on them who, alas! have no pity on themselves, and restore them to life. What happiness will it be for a Christian to be instrumental in this manner in bringing back any one from death to life! How agreeable will such prayers and tears be to our good Lord, which deliver a soul from sin and hell; and how beneficial to ourselves in covering a multitude of sins! But mark well the care our Lord took for the future wellbeing of those whom He raised to life. He ordered that they should give food to the daughter of Jairus as soon as her soul was returned into her body (Luke viii. 56); to signify that the sovereign means to keep the soul in life, and to recover her strength and health is a frequent and worthy participation of the Blessed Sacrament. He had no sooner given life to the widow's son, but He delivered him to his mother (Luke vii. 15); to signify the special care He expects from the Church, the common mother of the faithful, of all her children, whom by His grace He brings back from the death of sin, at the intercession of her prayers and tears. And with regard to Lazarus, whom He called out of his grave, bound feet and hands with winding bands, He immediately ordered that they should "loose him, and let him go" (John xi. 44); to signify the necessity of breaking the bands of affections and occasions of sin, in order to maintain a new life in such as were buried in sinful habits; and to the end that they may be qualified to begin and continue the great journey they are to make to the mountain of eternity.

Conclusion. From the consideration of these miracles of our Saviour, have recourse to Him on all occasions with humble confidence in His mercy and goodness, for obtaining light, life, and all other good, both for thyself and thy neighbours. Thou canst not do Him a greater pleasure, nor thyself a greater service.

DECEMBER 8.

On the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin.

1. Consider, how man, created in justice and sanctity; to be happy here in grace and innocence, and eternally happy here-

after in the enjoyment of his Creator, having wretchedly fallen from God by sin, and forfeited his original justice, with all the advantages annexed to it; and incurred at the same time all kind of miseries, both for time and eternity; out of which it was not in his power to extricate himself; the infinite goodness of God, out of pure pity and compassion, was pleased to decree that His own eternal Son should come down from heaven to be our Saviour; to redeem us from our sins with His most precious Blood; to bring with Him mercy, grace, and salvation to open to us the gates of everlasting life. Christians, this infinite goodness of our God we must never forget. It calls for all the return we are able to make of love and gratitude, of adoration, praise, and glory; and a total dedication of our being to the service of our great Deliverer for time and eternity. May heaven and earth, with all the angels and saints, bless and glorify His name for endless ages, for all these wonders of His mercy, bounty, and love for us!

2. Consider that God having thus decreed to give His only Son for our Saviour, was pleased to reveal this great mystery to our first parents; and afterwards from time to time to the Patriarchs and Prophets, and others His servants; to the end that this might be in all ages the object of the faith of all true believers; and that as none could attain to eternal salvation, but through the merits of the Son of God made Man for us, so all might approach to God, for mercy and grace, through faith in Him. In the meantime the Divine wisdom was pleased to employ full four thousand years in preparing the world for this great Redeemer. The most remarkable passages of Sacred History have all some relation to Him or His Church; the most eminent servants of God, and deliverers of His people, were so many figures and forerunners of Him; the law, with its sacrifices and ceremonies, alluded to Him, and to the great Sacrifice He was to offer. The writings of the Prophets and the Psalms are full of Him. When the time of His coming drew near, God, who had done great things for the Jewish people in general, and for that family in particular, of which He would have His Son to be born, was pleased to do still greater things in favour of her whom He had chosen, in His eternal decree, to bring forth this Lord of glory, and Saviour of the world. These great things wrought for her, even in her very conception, we celebrate in the festival of this day; to glorify Him who wrought them, and to honour her for whom they were wrought. Our Lord, in taking her for His Mother and us for His brethren, has authorised us to consider her as our Mother also; to have recourse to her as such; and to rejoice in all her advantages. We cannot love the Son of God, and be indifferent in what relates to the honour of His Mother.

3. Consider that the Son of God, making choice of this Blessed Virgin to be His Mother, was pleased to prepare her for this near

alliance with Him, by that extraordinary grace of keeping her ever pure from sin, either original or actual, for so it was becoming that she who was to bear in her womb, and bring forth to the world purity itself, should never be defiled with any spot or stain of sin. Learn hence, Christian souls, the care you ought to take to keep yourselves pure, if you hope to be agreeable in the eyes of this same Lord. Learn to purify yourselves from sin, as often as you approach to receive Him in the sacred Mysteries; and as the particular devotion of this holy time of Advent should be to prepare yourselves in such manner for worthily celebrating the birth of Christ, that you may also be partakers in this great mystery, by His coming to you and being spiritually born in you; see you make it your business to dispose yourselves for so great a happiness, by purifying yourselves from all defilement, either of the flesh or the spirit, and thus preparing a proper place for the Lord of Glory to be born in.

Conclusion. Honour the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, by a perpetual love of purity, and an imitation of her purity, as far as thy frailty and corruption will admit: thus mayest thou hope that the fountain of purity will come also to thee, and be spiritually born in thee.

DECEMBER 9.

On the Purity with which we are to prepare our souls for Christ.

1. Consider that He who prepared the Blessed Virgin to be the Mother of His Son, by this early care to keep her pure in the very conception, would thereby give us to understand what dispositions He expects in us, in order to our being also qualified for the spiritual conception and birth of the same Lord in our souls. For as we could never have been happy if the Son of God had not been born into this world for us; so we never can be happy if He be not also spiritually born in us. No, my soul, we must put off the old man, and put on the new, which is Jesus Christ, before we can come to God; and this putting on the new man must be effected by His being spiritually conceived in our souls. Now He can never come to any soul, to be spiritually conceived or born there, if that soul be not clean; for though He humbled Himself so far as to be born in a poor stable, yet He will not be born in a soul which is the habitation of unclean spirits, and therefore cannot be a proper place for His spiritual birth. It is then by purity of conscience we must prepare the way of the Lord, if we hope to have a share in the happiness He offers us by His incarnation and birth; without this, His coming will be to our condemnation.

2. Consider that this cleanness and purity, which is indispensably necessary for the spiritual conception and birth of Christ in our souls, must be, at least, from all wilful and deadly sin. For wherever wilful and deadly sin resides, there is the seat of Satan; there he resides and reigns; and consequently there can be no room for the birth of Christ in such a soul. So that the first and most essential branch of Christian purity, without which God has no part in us (Job xxxi. 2), and we have no part in Him, is freedom at least from mortal sin; joined with a fixed determination, for no consideration whatsoever; for no honour, interest, or pleasure; for no fear, love, or human respect; for no promises or allurements on the one hand, or terrors and threats on the other: in fine, for nothing the world can either give or take away, ever to consent, even in thought, to any such sin. Christians, what are your dispositions in this respect? Are your consciences either pure from deadly sin by innocence, or cleansed by penitence? Are your souls in a proper condition to welcome Christ? Are you in a settled resolution to give up the dominion of your souls to this great King, who desires to be born, and to live there? Are you willing to sacrifice to His will and pleasure all love that opposes His reign, so as to be ready to part even with life itself, rather than with your allegiance to Him? This is the purity of conscience He absolutely insists upon, and nothing less will satisfy Him. If you are not in this disposition, you are none of His, and He will not be born in you.

3. Consider that to welcome Christ in a suitable manner you must not content yourself with having your conscience cleansed only from mortal sin, or your soul settled in a resolution of never more being guilty of such sins as may eternally separate you from God and cast you into hell; this is but a low degree of Christian purity, and those who aim no higher are in great danger of not arriving even so far. To make light of smaller sins; to be indifferent about Christian perfection; to pretend to no more than avoiding hell; to indulge one's self in a negligent lukewarm way of living, and in a variety of evil habits and known sins, which one is willing to suppose are only venial; with little or no concern about the offence we commit against God, or any serious thought of amendment; so far from being a proper disposition to prepare the soul for the spiritual birth of Christ, is indeed the broad road to mortal sin, and too often ends in hell. A generous Christian, and one who is a true lover of his God, does not stand to inquire whether doing this or that will send his soul to hell or no. It is enough to determine him to avoid it with all his power, to know that it offends God; whom he loves with his whole heart, and therefore he dreads more doing anything that is displeasing in His eyes, than either death, or hell itself. My soul, are these thy dispositions?

Conclusion. Make it thy business, now at least, to labour for

purity of conscience, not only from deadly sin, but also from all known deliberate venial sins; and much more from indulging thyself in the habit of any such sin. For how canst thou expect that infinite purity should be willing to take up His abode in thy soul, if thou art not careful to keep it clean, at least from all wilful stains?

DECEMBER 10.

On purifying the interior Powers of the Soul.

1. Consider that as this spiritual conception and birth of Christ is to be perfected in our interior; so in order to dispose ourselves effectually for so great a happiness, and that it may continue with us unto life everlasting; by our abiding always in Christ, and He in us; we must be ever jealous of the purity of the interior powers of the soul. "All the glory of the king's daughter (the Christian soul) is within" (Ps. xliv.). There is to be the residence of the Lord of Glory: the beauty of the interior is to attract Him thither; and this beauty depends upon keeping the inward powers of the soul in a proper state of purity. See then, Christians, if you desire to have Christ with you, that you take proper care,—1. To purify your understanding from its errors, false opinions, and affected ignorance; by obliging it to open its eyes to the light of divine truth, in the exercise of meditation and prayer. 2. To purify your memory from distractions and wanderings; by accustoming it to the remembrance of God, and recollection of thought. 3. To purify your will from its disorderly affections; by fixing your heart upon solid and eternal goods, but especially upon your Sovereign Good, which is God Himself. Thus shall your whole souls be agreeable to Him.

2. Consider that one of the greatest enemies of this interior purity is that dissipation of mind in which many Christians pass their days; always thinking, but very seldom thinking on anything to the purpose. Alas! it is too true, that the minds of the generality of men are a constant thoroughfare for vain amusements; empty, idle thoughts, succeeding one another all the day long, and leaving little or no room for God, or the things of God and the soul, to come in, or make any lasting impression. Thus the inward castle is left unguarded; and the enemy has free access to come and rifle, and even murder the soul at pleasure, by suggesting a variety of criminal thoughts, which are admitted without resistance, through the supine carelessness and licentiousness of the mind; whilst on the other hand, divine grace is shut out from such souls, by their whole attention being engaged by toys and trifles; so that when God would come, and would visit them, they are not at home for Him. See, my soul, if

this be not thy case; and if it be, seek a remedy without delay, or there will be no room for Christ in thee. The only remedy is recollection of spirit, and attention to God in all thy ordinary actions and employments.

3. Consider that if it be so necessary, in order to conceive and bring forth Christ in thy interior, to maintain the purity of thy mind, by recollection of thought; it must be no less necessary to maintain also the purity of thy heart, by banishing thence all disorderly affections; for these are no less apt to disqualify the soul for this spiritual conception and birth of Christ in her; they are no less unclean and disagreeable in His eyes, and no less opposed to His reign. Neither can purity of mind and thought be maintained without purity of affection and heart; for the mind and thought are generally bent upon such objects as the heart affects: we think most upon what we love most, and therefore if the affections of our heart are impure, our thoughts also will be impure: for where our treasure is, there our heart and thoughts will be. Now that love alone is pure which makes God its treasure, and all such affections are impure as take the heart from God, and make it seek its treasure in something that is not God, or which at least divides the heart between God and the creature. And these are the disorderly affections that must be banished, in order to dispose the soul for Christ.

Conclusion. Examine well, and set thy interior in order particularly with regard to these two branches of purity, viz., purity of mind and purity of heart. For Christ will not come to be spiritually born in any soul, or make His abode where He is not allowed to be sole Master, both of mind and heart. Therefore the mind must be set free from the servitude of evil and useless thoughts, and the heart from the servitude of misplaced affections, and every sensual, worldly, or distracting love, to make place for the birth of Christ, and His reign in the soul. The soul that desires to have Christ with her, must endeavour to be like the spouse in the Canticles, a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up. Dissipation of thought, and disorderly affections, bring such company into the soul as the Son of God will not endure

DECEMBER 11.

On the Purity of our Actions.

1. Consider that this Christian purity, which is to prepare the way for Christ in us, and to dispose us to give Him a proper entertainment, must not be confined to the interior powers of the soul, but ought to extend itself also to the whole of our actions. As the tree ought to be pure, so the fruits also, for the tree is known by its fruits. Now our fruits are our actions; so that these must

be pure, or we shall not be pure, nor duly qualified for that happy union with Christ, which we aspire to at this approaching solemnity; for that which is impure cannot be united with sovereign purity. Now for our actions to be pure it is not enough that what we do be good in itself, it must also be good in all its circumstances; for one vicious circumstance is enough to corrupt the whole. But that on which the purity of our actions principally depends is our intention; according to that of the Gospel (Matt. vi. 22, 23), "If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome; but if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome." For the eye of the soul is the intention, which is single when the soul is carried towards God in all she does; but when the intention is turned away from God, and looks to something else, the eye is evil, and the work is darksome.

2. Consider that all Christian virtue depends upon this purity of intention: the meanest of our actions are ennobled by it, and the highest and most esteemed by men are good for nothing in the sight of God without it. Now the perfection of this purity of intention is to act in all things from the motive of the love of God; for His greater glory, and in conformity to His will. This carries the soul up to God, and brings Him to the soul: this produces a happy union of the soul with her God. Christians, see here the shortest way to all good, and the sovereign means of arriving at the height of perfection. The practice of this requires,—1. That you should begin your days and your works with God, by offering them all to Him and His service. 2. That you should consult His divine will in all things, and make it the rule of all you do. 3. That you should watch over yourselves, both in the beginning and in the progress of every work you take in hand, that you may exclude all by-motives suggested by self-love, human respect, interest, pleasure, or passion. 4. That you should often renew the directing your intention to God; and should endeavour to season your ordinary actions and employments with frequent aspirations of the soul towards Him.

3. Consider that the two capital enemies of purity of intention, and which spiritual persons in particular have most need to guard against, are vainglory and pride. The difference between the two is, that vainglory consists in loving and desiring to be esteemed by others; whereas pride consists in a vain esteem of one's self: vainglory makes persons ever anxious as to what others say or think of their words or actions; it makes them idolaters of a point of honour, of the esteem, reputation, and approbation of the world; but pride makes them full of themselves; measuring, on every occasion, themselves and their performances with those of others; and still giving themselves the preference before others, ever turning their eye upon their own excellence; building on their own lights, resolutions, strength or capacity, and taking a secret complacency in themselves and in all the good they do.

Both the one and the other are infinitely pernicious to the soul, by turning away her eye from God, and consequently robbing her of the fruit of her good works, and make them all rotten at heart, and good for nothing in the sight of God; they even pervert the best of her performances to her eternal condemnation, by shutting out God from them, and giving the preference to the devils of pride and vainglory before Him. As long as these have possession of the soul, there will be nothing but corruption there, and no room for the spiritual birth of Christ.

Conclusion. Aim at all times at purity in thy actions, by purifying thy intention from pride and vainglory, and from everything that may turn thy eye from God. Let God be the beginning and end of all thou dost; and take care to give every action its full perfection, by doing all for God's greater glory, and out of the pure motive of divine love, and the very meanest of thy daily actions will suffice to make thee a saint. Whereas neither long prayers, large alms, converting millions of souls, working miracles, nor giving thy body to the flames, will avail thee anything, if thy intention be vitiated by pride or vainglory.

DECEMBER 12.

On the Angelic Salutation.

1. Consider that after the Blessed Virgin had been prepared by the purity of her conception and the purity of her life; by purity of soul and body; of heart and mind, and of all her actions and intentions, to conceive in her sacred womb the Son of God, whom she had long before conceived in her soul: the time appointed being now come, the Archangel Gabriel was sent from heaven upon the most solemn embassy that ever was. He comes to treat with this most humble maid, concerning the great work of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, by His taking flesh of her, in order to the redemption of mankind from Satan, sin, and hell. He comes to proclaim reconciliation with God, the establishment of a new and everlasting covenant; a kingdom of heaven upon earth by grace, in favour of all who should submit to its law, and an eternal kingdom for them hereafter in glory. But give ear, my soul, to the Angel's address, and mark every word of it. The Angel being come in said to her, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women" (Luke i. 28). He greeted her with the word Ave or Hail, a word of salutation or congratulation for all that God had done and was about to do in her favour, and for choosing her to give birth to the Source of all our good. Let heaven and earth join in this Ave; as both are highly interested in the issue of this most sacred negotiation, which is to bring us innumerable benefits, both for time and eternity, by the incarna-

tion of the Son of God! And see, my soul, thou never forget to testify thy grateful sense of the share designed for thee in these graces and benedictions, by daily joining, with suitable devotion, in this holy salutation as often as thou repeatest the Ave Maria.

2. Consider how the Angel, in his salutation, styles the Blessed Virgin full of grace; to signify the supereminent degree of divine grace to which God elevated her soul to prepare her to be the mother of His Son. For she was full of that habitual grace which justifies and sanctifies the soul; full of faith and hope; full of divine charity; ever loving God with her whole heart, her whole soul, with all her mind, and with all her strength, and her neighbour as herself. She was full of humility, meekness, patience, obedience, and all other moral virtues; she was full of wisdom, godliness, fear of the Lord, and all other gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit: her memory was full of holy thoughts; her understanding with the light of God and divine truth; and her will with most fervent acts and affections of love, zeal, desire of the glory of God, of the coming of the Messias, and the redemption of the world. She was full of grace in all her thoughts, words, and works; her works were all perfect by the purity of intention, fervour and love, with which she performed them. Many saints have been full of grace; but none like this Queen and Mother of all saints; whose grace was proportioned to the great designs God had upon her, and to the supereminent dignity to which she was chosen, of being Mother of God. Congratulate the Blessed Virgin for this fulness of grace, which went on increasing all her life, by the good use she made of God's gifts; and beg that through her intercession thou mayest, like her, faithfully correspond, and diligently co-operate with every divine grace.

3. Consider how the Angel adds in his salutation, The Lord is with thee; to signify the source from which her fulness of grace flowed, and the extraordinary manner of God's communicating Himself and His graces, to this most highly favoured of His creatures. For our Lord was with the Blessed Virgin, not only by His essence, His presence, and His power, as He is with all men; not only by His sanctifying grace, as He is with the just; but in a more extraordinary manner, by a far more eminent grace, a closer union and an higher sanctification. And therefore the Angel adds, Blessed art thou amongst women; to express the supereminence of those graces and benedictions with which she was blessed from heaven, and should still be blessed, more and more; as well as the innumerable blessings that should be communicated to mankind through the fruit of her womb; and the blessings and praise that should on that account be given her by all generations. For as one woman by disobedience, in hearkening to the suggestions of the infernal serpent, was the beginning of the malediction that fell upon all mankind; so one woman by her humble obedience to the proposals brought her by an Angel

from heaven, was the beginning of the benedictions that were to come from the blessed fruit of her womb; by whom also she crushed that serpent's head which brought sin and death amongst us. See, my soul, with what sentiments of devotion thou oughtest to join with the Angel, the blessed St. Elizabeth, and the whole Church of God, in this solemn address to the Virgin Lady: "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (Luke i. 24).

Conclusion. Ever keep in thy soul a grateful remembrance of the great things God has done, for the Blessed Virgin and for us all, in the incarnation of His Son; by a frequent and devout repetition of the angelical salutation; always concluding it with that pious address of the Church, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death." Amen. How just it is that we should crave the assistance of her prayers for that critical time, when we can do least for ourselves, and when all is at stake for eternity.

DECEMBER 13.

On the Wonders of God, in the Incarnation of His Son.

1. Consider how after the Blessed Virgin's consent, and offering herself, with profound humility, entire obedience and perfect conformity to the sacred will of God, by those words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word" (Luke i. 38), the greatest of all the wonders of God, and of all His works, was immediately effected: even a Man-God, the miracle of miracles. For a human body perfect in all its parts, was formed in an instant by the Holy Ghost, out of the purest blood of the Blessed Virgin, and a most excellent rational soul was at the same time created; and this body and soul were joined with, and assumed by the Eternal Word, the second person of the most adorable Trinity. Thus God was made man, and man was made God; and the Blessed Virgin was made Mother of God. Thus in her womb was celebrated that sacred wedding of our human nature with the divine person of the Son of God; to the feast of which we are invited (Matt. xxii.). Thus was our humanity exalted to the very highest elevation, by being united with, and subsisting by the person of the Eternal Word, and we in consequence of this elevation of our human nature, have also been wonderfully dignified and exalted, by being raised up to a kindred with the most high God, who by taking to Himself our nature, has made us His brothers and sisters; and by assuming our humanity, has made us, in some measure, partakers of His divinity. Stand astonished at these wonders, which will be a subject of the greatest admiration both to men and angels for all

eternity ! Adore, praise, and love with all thy powers and all thy affections, the infinite goodness that has wrought all these wonders out of love to thee !

2. Consider the wonders of God in all the grace and excellence He conferred on the soul of Christ, and on His sacred humanity, in the first instant of His conception, in consequence of its being united with the divine person ; grace and excellence, immense and incomprehensible, and which exceeds, without comparison, all the rest of the wondrous works of God, and all whatsoever He has done at any time in favour of any one of His saints, or of all of them put together. For God did not give to His Son His Spirit by measure (John iii. 34), as to the rest of His saints ; but gave all things into His hands, and of His fulness we all receive (John i. 16), even all grace and truth, according to the measure of His giving it to us (Eph. iv. 7). Now this grace and excellence we may reduce under the following heads,—1. Purity from all manner of sin or imperfection whatsoever ; not as by privilege, but in His own right, as being the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sins of the world. 2. Sanctity, incomparably exceeding that of all the angels and saints put together ; whence He is called the Holy of Holies (Dan. ix.), that is, the Saint of all saints : the Spirit of God resting on Him with all His gifts, with incomprehensible plenitude (Isa. ii. 3). The beatific vision of the divine essence, and that in the most consummate degree, with proportionable love of the Deity and joy in God. 4. All the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God. 5. The power of working all kind of miracles, and of raising the dead to life, by His own will ; with command over all the elements and over all nature. 6. The power of forgiving sins, converting sinners, changing their hearts, ordaining sacraments and sacrifices, and distributing amongst men graces and supernatural gifts. 7. The office of perpetual Head of all the Church, both in heaven and on earth, and the source of all blessings, gifts and graces, that either have been, or shall at any time be bestowed upon His mystical body, or any of its members. What reason have we not to bless and praise the eternal Father for all these excellent gifts and graces with which He has enriched His Son, the Man Christ Jesus ! How ought we not also rejoice and congratulate the sacred humanity of our Saviour on this occasion, and give thanks without ceasing, for that share of divine grace which from this overflowing fountain is continually bestowed on us !

3. Consider in all this grace and excellence, conferred on the humanity of Christ in His incarnation, how that of the prophet was verified (Isa. ix. 6), "A Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us, and the government is upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God, the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace." Yes,

Christians, these great titles bestowed on your Saviour by the Spirit of God, abundantly declare both the wonders God wrought for Him, and those which, through His incarnation, He has wrought also for you, in giving Him to you: that He might be not only your Saviour, your Redeemer, and your Deliverer; but also your king, your lawgiver, your teacher, your model, your advocate, your physician, your friend, your high-priest and victim, your father, and your head: in a word, the source of all your good; the way, the truth and the life, by whom alone you can go to God. And do not these great things effected by the incarnation of the Son, show forth the power, the wisdom, the mercy and goodness of God, with the other divine attributes, infinitely more than any of the other works of the Almighty?

Conclusion. Honour by lively faith, serious and frequent meditation, and sincere devotion, all those wonders of God, wrought in the incarnation of His Son in favour of Him and of us; and lead henceforward lives such as become those who, by this mystery, have been so highly exalted, and brought so near to the source of all grace and sanctity.

DECEMBER 14.

On the Glory of God in the Incarnation of His Son.

1. Consider how the angels on the birth of Christ sang that hymn, recorded Luke ii. 14, "Glory to God on high, and on earth, peace to men of good-will;" to give us to understand that the incarnation and birth of the Son of God was designed to produce those two principal fruits, the greater glory of God, and the peace and reconciliation of man with God. The glory of God shines forth most brightly in the incarnation of His Son, by the manifestation of His power, wisdom, goodness, justice, and mercy, and by setting these divine attributes in their most beautiful light. The almighty power of God is manifested in the wonders He wrought in this mystery, and especially in that greatest and most glorious of all, a God-man: a greater work without comparison than the creation of ten thousand worlds. The infinite wisdom of God is manifested in this wonderful way of uniting God and man, the Creator and the creature, which were at an infinite distance from each other, so closely as to be but one and the same person: and of reconciling man who was fallen from God by sin, in such manner, as that without His divine Majesty's departing in the least from the reparation due to His glory, He should receive from this one man, for every moment of time and eternity, a homage of adoration, praise, thanksgiving and love, infinitely more glorious to the Deity than all the homage of ten thousand worlds could be; though they were full of angels

and men eternally employed in nothing else but in glorifying God.

2. Consider with relation to the other attributes of God, viz., His goodness, mercy, and justice; how brightly they also shine forth in the incarnation of His Son: in which according to the Psalmist (Ps. lxxxiv.), "Mercy and truth met each other: justice and peace have kissed." The infinite goodness of God never manifested itself so clearly, as in giving His only Son to us, by the mystery of His incarnation, to deliver us from all evil, and bring all good to us, in order to make us happy for eternity. The infinite mercy of God is set in no less clear a light by this mystery; in His giving us, out of pure compassion, without regard to our merits, such and so great a Redeemer, to be both our priest and sacrifice, in propitiation for our sins. And as to the infinite justice of God, so far from its being set aside in this mystery, or forgetting its right, it never manifested itself more, than when it insisted upon such a satisfaction for sin, as could not be paid by any lesser or meaner person than God made man. So that the justice of God has been in effect more evidently demonstrated by the Son of God coming down amongst us to be a victim for our sins, than by any other judgments or punishments that either have been, or ever could be inflicted by the divine Majesty, either in time or eternity, for the sins of men.

3. Consider that the infinite dignity of the person of this God-man, as it gives an infinite worth to every thought, word, or action, and every suffering of His; so is it an inexhaustible source from which eternally flows infinite glory to God. See then, my soul, how much the incarnation of the Son of God has increased the glory of His Father; since every beat of the heart of this God made man, gives infinitely more glory to the Father, both in time and eternity, than all the adoration and praise of millions of angels and millions of worlds could ever have done, though employed in nothing but in glorifying God. Consider, too, all that glory which the Son has procured for His Father, by His gospel, by His worship which He has established upon earth, by that great Sacrifice of His body and blood, offered up daily on a million of altars, and that kingdom of souls which He has purchased to be delivered up hereafter to His Father to glorify Him for all eternity.

Conclusion. Rejoice in this glory which the Son of God has procured both for His Father and for Himself by His incarnation; and sing to Him with the angels hymns of perpetual praise, for having so well associated, in this mystery, His own glory with thy peace and salvation.

DECEMBER 15.

On the Glory the Son of God gave His Father in His Mother's Womb.

1. Consider that as the soul of Christ from the first instant of His conception, by being assumed to the divine person of the Word, was full of light and knowledge, and consequently enjoyed from the beginning, the perfect use of reason; so the inward powers and faculties of His soul, from the first instant of His conception, were always employed. Now as the great design of God, in the incarnation of His Son, was His own glory and the redemption of man: so the continual occupation of the Son of God made man, was in procuring His Father's glory and man's salvation: from the very first moment of His being by creation, this was His perpetual employment. It was from the beginning the indispensable duty both of angels and men, in their first creation, to turn themselves immediately to God, by adoration, oblation, and love; and to dedicate themselves eternally to Him and His glory. The omission of this was the cause of the condemnation of Lucifer and his companions; and the like omission is, to this day, the cause of the condemnation of millions of men; who unhappily turn themselves away from God for the sake of the creature. But the soul of Christ our great Deliverer, and our most perfect model and pattern, has taught us better things by His nine months' occupation in the virgin's womb; where silent as He is, He preaches to us admirable lessons with regard to the glory we ought at all times to give to God.

2. Consider that these lessons which the Son of God teaches us by His example, in His mother's womb, are contained in the different acts of virtue in which He there spent His time. He began, as we learn from the Psalmist (Ps. xxxix. 7, 8, 9), by offering Himself to the Father without reserve, to do His will: He embraced this will in the midst of His heart, He substituted Himself in place of the ancient sacrifices, to be the great burnt-offering and sin-offering that should be immolated for God's glory, and for the expiation of the sins of the world. He presented His body just then formed by the Holy Ghost, with His ears pierced (as was prescribed in the law, with relation to such as yielded themselves to be servants for ever, Deut. xv. 17), to be entirely at the disposal of His Father, a perpetual servant, obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. Let us hear from Himself these dispositions; "Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not desire; but Thou hast pierced my ears for Me. Burnt-offerings and sin-offering Thou didst not require: then said I, Behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of Me that I should do Thy will. My God, I have desired it, and Thy law in the

midst of My heart." How happy shall we be, if we labour in earnest to imitate these dispositions of our dear Jesus; by embracing, like Him, the will of God and His holy law in the midst of our hearts, and offering ourselves without reserve to be His devoted servants!

3. Consider the infinite glory which our Lord gave to His Father all the time He was in His Mother's womb: first by the acts of adoration and homage which, as man, He continually paid to God; annihilating Himself in His sight; and bowing down all the powers of His soul, to offer Him a most acceptable worship, worthy of His divine Majesty: secondly, by acts of praise and thanksgiving which He offered both for Himself and for the whole creation: thirdly, by acts of oblation, and eternal dedication of Himself to His Father; to be ever His, both in life and death, in time and eternity; with a consecration of His soul and body, His will, memory and understanding, all His senses and faculties, and all His thoughts, words, and deeds, to His divine sacrifice: fourthly, by acts of most pure and most perfect love, zeal, and desire of ever promoting in, and above all things, the sanctification of the name of God, the propagation of His kingdom, and doing His will upon earth as it is in heaven. Such acts as these, joined with acts of charity and prayer, for us poor sinners, were the perpetual occupation of Christ our Lord, in His mother's womb. A happy employment indeed, and most worthy of our imitation.

Conclusion. Embrace, and follow in the practice of thy life, these heavenly lessons which the Son of God teaches thee by His divine example from His mother's womb: no other exercises can be more agreeable to Him or to His Father; or more advantageous to thyself.

DECEMBER 16.

On the Charity of the Son of God for us, in His Mother's Womb.

1. Consider that as the soul of the Son of God, from the first instant of His conception in His mother's womb, was ever employed in the love of His heavenly Father, and in perpetual adoration and oblation of Himself to His most holy will; so for the love of His Father, and in consequence of His holy will, He was also employed from the beginning in the love of us, and in the perpetual exercise of unbounded charity, in our regard. His soul in the instant it received a being, was assumed to the divine person of the Word; and in the light of this Eternal Word clearly saw, readily submitted to, lovingly embraced, with an Ecce venio, Behold I come, that most sacred and adorable decree of the

blessed Trinity, by which it was ordained that the Son of God should become man, for the reparation of the honour and glory of God, infinitely injured and outraged by man; and that He should be the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind; that He should take upon Him all their sins, to be cancelled with His blood; that by His death He should rescue them from the tyranny of Satan and sin, and a second and everlasting death; and should open in their favour the gates of mercy, grace and salvation; in a word, that He should be the great Mediator of God and man; their high-priest and victim. In consequence of, and in obedience to this heavenly decree, He began, from the first instant of His conception, to exercise Himself in such acts of charity for us, as were agreeable to His office of our Saviour and Mediator; which He joined with a perpetual attention to His Father's glory. This was His continual employment in His mother's womb, as well as in all the time of His life. Let heaven and earth eternally acknowledge, praise and bless, His infinite charity!

2. Consider what these acts of charity were, which the Son of God exercised in our regard, from the first instant of His conception,—1. He had us always before His eyes, and in the midst of His heart; He was not one moment without thinking of us. 2. He was perpetually praying for us, that we might be delivered from all evil, and brought through Him to all good. 3. He had a most tender compassion for our miseries, considering us all as His brethren; and He continually bewailed our sins. 4. He offered Himself without ceasing, to the justice of His Father, to suffer all that He pleased for the expiation of our sins; He had even a longing desire (such was the excess of His love) for the accomplishment of that baptism, with which He was to be baptized in His blood; because thereby He was to redeem us from our sins. See, my soul, how very early our dear Jesus began to show Himself a Jesus, that is, a Saviour to us. See how affectionately, and effectually too, He has loved us, even from His first conception in His mother's womb. And have we hitherto been sensible of these wonders of His love for us? Have we ever yet given Him a proper place in our heart, who has been so much beforehand with us, as to admit us, from the beginning, into the very centre of His heart! Let us detest our past ingratitude in this regard, and henceforth yield ourselves without reserve, captives to His love!

3. Consider, in particular, the sentiments which the soul of our blessed Saviour had, with regard to our sins, and in what manner He was affected by them, even from His conception. He had even then a clear sight, and a most lively sense of the sins of the whole world, from the first to the last. He saw them, in the light of God, with all their aggravations, their deformity, and infinite malice, from their opposition to the infinite goodness of

God. He saw the outrages they offered to the divine Majesty, and how odious they were in His eyes. And He saw at the same time all the havoc they caused in the souls of men, made after God's own image and likeness, and all their dreadful consequences, both for time and eternity. But what tongue can express, or heart conceive, how strangely His soul was affected with this sight? Love for His heavenly Father, on the one hand, and zeal for His glory, gave Him an inexpressible hatred and horror for all these enemies of God, these high treasons against the divine Majesty. And again, His love for us, and concern for our salvation, on the other hand, filled Him with more than mortal grief and anguish for the general corruption with which He saw the whole world infected, and the loss of so many millions of souls. His horror and hatred for our sins was equal to the love He bore His Father: and the grief and anguish He continually endured for them was equal to His love for us; even that love which made Him give Himself up to the worst of deaths, to cancel our sins with His own blood. Thus between love of His Father and love of us, the Son of God lived in a state of continual suffering, even in His mother's womb; and of such bitter sufferings as nothing but His love could have endured. Christians, learn from your dear Redeemer, in what manner you ought to be affected with the thought of your sins! Learn to hate and detest them above all things, as enemies of your God, as your own mortal enemies; and bewail them all your lifetime.

Conclusion. Embrace with all the affection of your soul the divine charity of the Son of God, which has thus exerted itself, even from His mother's womb, in favour of you. But remember that He expects of you a return of love, and this, with your whole heart: and that nothing less will content Him.

DECEMBER 17.

On the Benefits the Son of God brings to us by His Incarnation.

1. Consider that man in his creation was highly favoured by His Maker, and elevated by Him to a supernatural state; he was enriched with the treasures of original grace, justice and sanctity; and destined to eternal life with the living God. In the meantime he was placed in the earthly paradise, as a foretaste of that happy life, where, if he had kept the law of his Creator, he might have fed upon the tree of life, and so have passed to a better paradise of true and everlasting life, without going through the gate of death. But alas! by falling from God by sin, he forfeited these treasures, and all these advantages: he was stripped at once of all the goods of grace; he was strangely wounded in all the

powers and faculties of his soul; his understanding was overclouded with ignorance, and deluded with a variety of errors; his memory and imagination were distracted with empty toys and vanities, and hurried away from the remembrance of his God; his will was perverted with malice; his inferior appetite disordered with rebellious passions; and his whole soul became weak beyond expression to everything good, and strongly bent upon evil. Thus had unhappy man, by his apostacy, lost both his God and all his good; and had incurred all kind of evils, both of soul and body, for time and eternity: in losing his God, he had fallen into the hands of four merciless enemies; sin and Satan, death and hell. Now the Son of God, by His incarnation, came down amongst us in order to deliver us from these evils which we had incurred by sin: to reconcile us to God, and to restore to us all that good for which we were first created. What reason then have we not, my soul, to rejoice in this incarnation of the Son of God, the Sovereign means of all good, and the source of mercy, grace, and salvation to us! What praise and thanksgiving, what perpetual love and service, do we not owe to this great Deliverer!

2. Consider how the Son of God, by His incarnation, has brought us from heaven most sovereign and effectual remedies for all our evils. He brought light to us, who were sitting before in darkness, and in the shadow of death; coming in quality of our teacher both by word and example; of our lawgiver, and our Apostle; and declaring to us the will of God. He brought with Him also our ransom, to redeem us from slavery to Satan and sin; and to make us free indeed: He was sent to preach deliverance to captives, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, even the great jubilee of general remission of all our debts, and the loosing of our bonds (Luke iv. 19). He came as our physician, to heal our maladies, with the medicine of His own most sacred blood. "We were wandering in a wilderness, in a place without water (Ps. cvi.) We could find no way to a city for our habitation (our true and everlasting home); we were hungry and thirsty (destitute of all proper food for our souls), and were bound, in want, and in irons; we were brought low with labours, and weakened; and there was none to help us." And He came to deliver us out of all these distresses; to lead us to the right way, to conduct us to our true country; to feed our hungry souls with good things; to break our bonds in sunder; to bring us refreshment, comfort and rest from our labours; to satisfy all our wants; to redress all our miseries, to cure our weakness with His strength, and to raise us from death to life. All this, and much more, has the Son of God effected in our favour, by coming down from heaven to be our Emmanuel, that is, God with us. And shall we not then, my soul, join with the Psalmist in frequently repeat-

ing in admiration at all the wonders of divine goodness, that sacred hymn: "Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to Him, and His wonderful works to the children of men. Let them exalt Him in the Church of the people, and praise Him in the chair of the ancients. Let them sacrifice to Him a sacrifice of praise, and declare His works with joy. Give glory to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever. Let them say so, that have been redeemed by the Lord; whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of all countries" (Ps. cvi.) Yea, let them say so, and sing forth the mercies of the Lord, for all eternity. Amen. Amen.

3. Consider that however great and inexpressible these graces and benefits are, which the Son of God has brought with Him by His incarnation, in order to deliver us from all evil, and to communicate to us all good; yet none of them all, nor all of them together, will save us, without our consent and concurrence, and due correspondence on our part with His mercy and grace; by yielding ourselves up entirely to Him, by faith and obedience. For what will it avail us to have the light come down from heaven to shine upon us, if we shut our eyes against it, and love darkness more than the light? Or what shall we be the better for the ransom which our Redeemer brings with Him, if we prefer slavery and chains before the liberty of the children of God, and choose rather to stay with Satan and sin, amongst the husks of swine, than to go with our Deliverer, who desires to take us home with Him to His Father's house? Alas! so far from being the better for all these graces and benefits, we should indeed be much the worse, if we should receive them in vain, and by our ingratitude, and obstinacy in sin, pervert them to our greater condemnation. For what greater perversity can there be, than that we should know that the way, the truth, and the life is come down from heaven in our favour; and should still choose to go astray from the way, and to follow the father of lies into the regions of death?

Conclusion. Embrace in such manner, your great Deliverer, who comes by His incarnation to be your Emmanuel, by faithful and diligent correspondence with all His mercies and graces; so that He may be always with you, and you always with Him; and that nothing in life or death may separate you from Him any more.

DECEMBER 18.

On the other Benefits of our Saviour to Mankind by His Incarnation.

1. Consider that the Son of God, by His incarnation, came amongst us to be the Father and head of all mankind, according

to the spirit and according to grace, as Adam was according to the flesh and according to nature. He came as the second Adam, to undo all that evil which the first Adam had done, and brought upon us all; and to impart to us all that good our first father had deprived us of. That as by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death; and so both passed upon all men: justice and grace should in like manner enter into the world, by one man, in order to our eternal life. Hence in quality of our Father He imparts to us a second birth; by which we, who by our natural birth are children of wrath, corrupted by sin and condemned to hell, are born again by grace, cleansed from sin by His blood, incorporated in Him, made children of God, and heirs of everlasting life. In quality of our head, He communicates to us all manner of graces, by virtue of His merits upon all the members of His mystical body, who by faith and obedience adhere to Him (John xv. 4, 5).

2. Consider the other relations, marked down in the Word of God, which our Lord has been pleased we should have with Him, by means of His incarnation; such as that of being His brethren (as He has been pleased to call us (Ps. xxii.), I will declare Thy name to My brethren), by His taking our flesh and blood. A relation which gives us an honour, not granted to the angels, of being near akin, even by consanguinity, to the Son of God Himself: for He never took upon Him the nature of the angels, but took our nature, that He might be like to us in all things, excepting sin, for so it behoved Him, who was to be our High Priest, to make reconciliation for our sins (Heb. ii. 16, 17). He is our eldest brother, in the order of God's election, "the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29), in whom, and for whose sake we also are elected: to be conformable to His image here by grace, and hereafter in glory, through Him. In this quality of eldest brother, He is also our Priest (as under the law of nature, before the written law, the first-born were priests) to officiate for us in all things that appertain to God (Heb v. 1), as also our Prince, Leader, and Captain in our warfare; our Tutor and Governor, our truest friend to promote all our interests, to manage all our causes, to defend us from all our enemies, and to bring us on in our pilgrimage, till He presents us to His Father and our Father in His eternal kingdom. How happy are we in such a Brother!

3. Consider that by means of the incarnation of the Son of God, we are related to Him not only as children to our Father, as members to our head, and as brothers to our eldest brother, but also as a holy building to our foundation, in which He is the corner-stone, in whom all the building framed together groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord—a habitation of God in the spirit (Eph. ii. 20, 21, 22); and as branches to the stock into which we are engrafted and planted by baptism. Hence our

Lord tells us (John xv. 4, 5) : "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; so neither can you, except you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches ; he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing." But of all the relations we have to the Son of God, in consequence of His incarnation, there is none more endearing than that of our being made His spouse : the Church being the bride, the wife of the Lamb, brought out of His side as Eve was from the side of Adam, when cast into the deep sleep of death upon the cross ; and espoused to Him by an everlasting and inviolable contract, of which Christian matrimony is the sacred and mysterious sign ; and every soul that is in the state of grace, partaking in the dignity and happiness of this near and dear relation of spouse to the Lamb of God. Christians, are you sensible how great this dignity and happiness is, for your souls to be espoused to the Son of God ? In consequence of which, you should be one spirit with Christ, as Adam and Eve were one flesh. Take care to be ever faithful and true to this divine spouse ; who has loved you and delivered Himself for you, that He might sanctify and cleanse you for Himself, with His own most precious blood.

Conclusion. Behave in your whole life and conversation, agreeably in all respects, to these sacred relations which you have with the Son of God ; and never degenerate from such a Father, such a Head, such a Brother, and such a Spouse, by any actions unworthy of either the dignity or sanctity of a Christian.

DECEMBER 19.

On our Saviour, as our King and our Priest.

1. Consider that the Son of God, by His incarnation, came also amongst us to be our King and Priest ; and in these qualities to impart all blessings to us ; even to make us also kings and priests to His Father (Apoc. i. 6). He is our true Melchisedeck, sovereign King and High Priest for ever ; He is the true King of justice and of peace ; of whose reign there shall be no end. He came by His incarnation to dethrone the usurper Satan, and to establish amongst us the kingdom of grace by which He reigns in the souls of His true subjects. For His kingdom is not of this world, nor like to any of its petty kingdoms ; but is of a far more excellent constitution, a more noble foundation, and a more extensive dominion, reaching to all nations and to all ages ; it is never to be conquered, it shall be glorious for evermore. Of this great King and His reign the royal Prophet sings (Ps. lxxi.), "Give to the king Thy judgment,

O God—to judge Thy people with justice, and Thy poor with judgment. Let the mountains receive peace for the people, and the hills justice. He shall judge the poor of the people, and He shall save the children of the poor, and He shall bring down the oppressor (the devil). And He shall continue with the sun, and beyond the moon throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the fleece, and as showers falling gently upon the earth. In His days shall justice spring up, and abundance of peace, till the moon be taken away. And He shall rule from sea to sea; all kings of the earth shall adore Him, all nations shall serve Him. For He shall deliver the poor from the mighty—and He shall save the souls of the poor. He shall redeem their souls from usuries and iniquities, and their names shall be honourable in His sight." Such, Christians, is our King, who shall rule us for evermore; and such are the blessings He brings us by His reign, according to what is written in the same Psalm: In Him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed. Let His name then be blessed for evermore; and blessed be His heavenly Father, who worketh these wonderful things in our favour. Yea, blessed be the Name of His Majesty for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. So be it. So be it.

2. Consider that the Son of God, incarnate for us, is not only our King, He is our Priest too; the High Priest of God and man. Now every high-priest, says the Apostle (Heb. v. 1), "taken from amongst men, is appointed for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sin." And thus the Son of God, becoming man by His incarnation, was called by His Father, and anointed to this high priestly office by His Holy Spirit, to execute every branch of it, to the glory of His Father, and in behalf of us men. This He did "in the days of His flesh, that is, of His mortal life, by offering up prayers and supplications with a strong cry and tears" (Heb. v. 7); this He did in death, by the great Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, which He then offered upon the altar of the cross. This He continues to do in the sanctuary of heaven, into which He has carried the blood of His sacrifice, to be there presented before the throne of His Father; where also with His blood He continually makes intercession to obtain mercy, grace, and salvation for us. Such are the benefits which are derived upon us from the everlasting Priesthood of our Lord. "Seeing, then," says the Apostle, "that we have this great High Priest, that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a High Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities; but one tempted in all things like as we, yet without sin. Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid" (Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16).

3. Consider that Christ our Lord, not content with executing the priestly office, in our behalf, whilst He was upon earth, in His own person; and continuing to execute it after His ascension in the sanctuary of heaven; was pleased, before His departure hence, to ordain others, not as His successors (for His Priesthood is eternal), but as His ministers, to exercise in His name, and for the benefit of His people, all the offices and functions of the priesthood here amongst us; He assisting and co-operating with them from heaven; and, as He has promised, being always with them, and keeping up a perpetual succession of them, even till the consummation of the world (Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, 20). So that we not only owe to that great High-Priest and His priesthood all those blessings which He in person has at any time bestowed upon mankind; but also those many graces and spiritual benefits which He daily confers upon us, by the ministry of men, whom He has commissioned to preach His Gospel, administer His Sacraments, remit sins in His name, bless in His name, impart the grace of the Holy Ghost, by imposition of hands; and to consecrate, and offer up daily in His name, His body and blood for all the great ends of sacrifice. In all these offices our Lord assists as our High Priest; and whatsoever grace is given to the faithful is all derived from His Priesthood, who has imparted indeed to those whom He has made His Vicegerents the doctrine, the authority, the spirit, the anointing, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which He received of His Father; yet so that, in all their performances, He Himself is still the principal actor. See then, Christians, how happy we are in having such an High Priest.

Conclusion. Keep in your souls a grateful sense of the innumerable benefits which have been conferred upon mankind by the incarnation of the Son of God, by which He is become our King and our Priest. Adhere to Him in both these qualities; daily beg that He would establish His reign in you, and by His priesthood deliver you from your sins, and bring you to His Father to be eternally His.

DECEMBER 20.

On our Saviour as our Sacrifice.

1. Consider that the Son of God, by His incarnation, came amongst us not only to be our King and our Priest, but to be our Sacrifice also; and in that quality to be an inexhaustible source of good to our souls. Man, from the beginning, owed to his God the homage of adoration, praise, and glory; he was bound to make Him the best offerings he was able; he owed his God perpetual thanksgiving for His goodness and bounty to him; and

he was ever bound to acknowledge, by prayer, his total dependence upon this Giver of all good gifts, without whom he could do nothing. But by sin he contracted a new debt, for which he was bound to make satisfaction to divine Justice for the offence he had committed. Hence we find, from the beginning of the world, frequent mention in the Scriptures of sacrifice offered to God: hence in the Law were so many ordinances relating to burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and peace-offerings, as so many kinds of sacrifice to answer the different branches of man's duty to his Maker. But alas! how little proportion was there in all or any of these ancient sacrifices with the ends for which they were offered. How insignificant in itself (abstracting from that sacrifice to come, of which they were types) was the homage, adoration, glory and thanksgiving which was paid to the infinite majesty of God, by oblations of oxen, goats, and sheep! How much less could the blood of oxen or of goats take away sins, or be a proper atonement for the sin by which man had fallen from God! Therefore the Son of God came by His incarnation to make Himself the Victim and Sacrifice of all mankind, to substitute Himself for burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and peace-offerings; to answer in a most perfect manner all the ends of sacrifice, and to wash away our sins with His own most precious blood. Blessed be His name, through all generations, for His infinite goodness to us!

2. Consider what great things the Son of God has done for us in making Himself our sacrifice, and what He has enabled us to do by virtue of His sacrifice. In dying for us upon the cross He made of Himself a holocaust or whole burnt-offering for us of most sweet savour to His heavenly Father; a sacrifice of homage, adoration, praise and glory, worthy of the infinite Majesty of God, because of the infinite dignity both of the offerer and the offering. In bowing His head and yielding up His spirit for us, He made an oblation of Himself, infinitely agreeable to His Father, for all the other ends of sacrifice; He offered a thanksgiving, truly worthy of God, both for Himself and for us: a peace-offering of infinite value for purchasing peace and happiness for us, and for opening in our favour all the fountains of grace and life; and particularly He made Himself a sin-offering for us all, a victim of propitiation of infinite virtue for taking away the sins of the world, and reconciling and bringing back lost man to an eternal union with his God. And this great sacrifice with all its fruits He has in such manner made over to us, as to authorise and enable us to offer the same sacrifice with Him, and in His name, to His Father for the same ends as He did; and to give thereby infinite glory to God, and to procure infinite blessings to ourselves and to all the world.

3. Consider that this sacrifice, which Christ our Lord offered to His Father, on the altar of the cross; did not expire by His death,

no more than His priesthood did. The whole victim of His sacrifice was restored to Him at His resurrection, and He carried it with Him, at His ascension, to the sanctuary of heaven; where with it, He continually gives adoration and thanks to His Father, both in His own and our name; and continually pleads for mercy and grace for us. But this is not all; He also appointed this same sacrifice to be kept up for ever in His Church, in the Sacred Mysteries; and to be offered daily, for the like intentions, on thousands of altars, in all nations, as long as the world shall endure: Himself in person, though invisibly, officiating therein, both as priest and victim, as offerer and offering. See then, my soul, if anything more can be desired to make us completely happy; who have continually amongst us such a sacrifice, in which we have the source of all happiness, and the sovereign means of all good.

Conclusion. Never be wanting on thy part, in due correspondence with all these graces and blessings of heaven; which the Son of God has purchased for thee by His sacrifice; and which He seeks to enrich thee with, by the application of the fruits of it in the daily oblation of His body and blood. Learn then, my soul, to unite all thy good works with those of the Son of God, incarnate for the love of thee, and daily offer thyself with Him who offers Himself in sacrifice for the love of thee! Unite thy adoration, praise, and thanksgiving, with that which thy Saviour, as man, continually presents to His Father in heaven, and with that which He daily offers Him, on a million of altars, here upon earth; and thy adoration, praise and thanksgiving shall not fail of being accepted. In like manner unite thy prayers and supplications for mercy, with those of Jesus Christ, and with His sacrifice; and thou shalt always find through Him both mercy and grace.

DECEMBER 21.

On St. Thomas, the Apostle.

1. Consider, that in celebrating the festivals of the saints, we must have principally in view the glory of the God of the saints, and giving Him thanks for the wonders of His grace in them; and that glory to which He has exalted them and with which He has crowned them to all eternity. God is wonderful indeed in His saints, taking them, as it were, from the earth and from the dunghill, to make them the princes of His people; the pillars and foundations of His Church; prodigies of His grace; full of His divine Spirit; dispensers of His treasures, and workers of all kind of wonders upon earth; and now has exalted them to sit with Him on His throne in heaven, and to come one day

with Him to be the judges of men and angels. See then, Christians, what subjects we have to meditate upon, on the festivals of the Apostles; what motives we have to praise and glorify God for all He has done for them; and through them for us all: what encouragement we have, however mean and poor we may be in all that is good, to rely on the power, goodness, and mercy of God; who loves to work His greatest wonders in favour of such as are little and humble; and what lessons we have for our instruction, and imitation, in the ready correspondence of the Apostles with divine grace, and their diligent co-operation with it unto the end.

2. Consider, from the epistle read on this day (Eph. iii. 19), the great advantages we have received, through the ministry of the Apostles, in being called to the Christian religion, of which they were the first preachers and teachers. For now, says St. Paul, speaking to all Christians, "You are no more strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building framed together groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord." Yes, Christians, it was by the ministry of the Apostles, we were originally brought to all this good: and as the same Apostle adds (Heb. xii. 22), by our admission into the Church of God, "We are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the Church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all; and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament, and to the sprinkling of blood which speaketh better than that of Abel:" by crying to heaven for mercy, and not for justice. O happy communion of saints! A communion in all that is good, with all who are good: to which we have been introduced by the Apostles of Christ. Glory for evermore be to their Lord, the Author of all their and our good!

3. Consider the particular lessons St. Thomas teaches us by his example. When the other disciples opposed our Saviour's going back to Jerusalem, where the Jews had lately sought His death, St. Thomas alone generously said: 'Let us go that we may die with Him" (John xi. 16). Such was his love for his Master, and such his courage in His cause. Are we in the like dispositions? Are we willing to die with Christ or for Him: when we are frightened with every little difficulty or danger, and ready to turn our backs upon Him rather than to risk anything, or part with our own honour or satisfaction for the love of Him? St. Thomas was slow of belief, with regard to the resurrection of our Lord, till he was favoured both with the sight of Him and the handling of His wounds; but then he yielded immediately, and cried out with the most lively faith and ardent love, "My

Lord and my God!" This lively faith and ardent love continued with him ever growing and increasing, and carried him through all his apostolic labours amongst so many barbarous nations and through all his sufferings, till by a glorious martyrdom it brought him to his Lord, and eternally united him to Him. Oh, that we had some little share in this lively faith and ardent love! It would make labours and sufferings easy to us, and bring us also to our Lord.

Conclusion. So glorify God in this saint as to encourage thyself to walk in his footsteps by imitating his virtues, in hopes of sharing in his happiness. And for this end ever beg his prayers and intercession.

DECEMBER 22.

On the Ember Week in Advent.

1. Consider that the Ember Weeks, at the four seasons of the year, are times set aside by the Church from the earliest ages, for fasting and prayer. The primitive Church had that zealous regard for the glory of God and the sanctification of the souls of her children, by training them up to these religious exercises, so much recommended by the Word of God, that she would not suffer any of the four parts of the year to pass without calling upon them to sanctify one week, at least, by more than ordinary devotion, and by offering up to God the tribute of a penitential fast. In this she had also in view, that by their diligence in this practice, her children might draw down a blessing from God on their labours and on the fruits of the earth, that they might give thanks for the blessings already received, and implore the divine mercy for the forgiveness of the sins they were continually committing. Christians, let us, at these holy times, enter into the views of our Holy Mother the Church; and by joining with all the people of God upon earth, in fasting, alms-deeds, and humble prayer, make the best return we are able to the Giver of all good gifts for all His benefits; beg a continuance of His graces and blessings and the pardon of our sins, through the merits of the Passion and death of His only Son our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2. Consider that these penitential fasts of the Ember Weeks are also instituted in order to turn away the judgments of God, which we have too great reason to apprehend may be hanging over our heads on account of our sins. For if we consider the multitude and enormity of the crimes that are daily and hourly committed amongst Christians of all degrees and conditions—crimes that continually cry to heaven for vengeance, and how few there are in comparison who are not frequently falling into

mortal sin, we cannot but fear lest God's judgments may be speedily falling upon Christendom if not averted by prayer and penance. It is then not only a duty of obedience to our Mother the Church, but of charity, that we owe both to ourselves and our neighbour, to join at these times in prayer and penance in order to prevent those terrible visitations of divine justice, and to turn to the Lord with our whole heart, in fasting, and weeping, and mourning, as the prophet admonishes (Joel iii.), that so by entering into dispositions of true penitents, and seriously turning away from evil, we may prevail with our merciful God to turn away His scourges from us, which we have deserved by our sins. Oh that Christians would remember this on their days of fasting, and would enter into the true spirit of these institutions, chiefly designed for abolishing sin and appeasing the divine justice! Thus would they offer to God such a fast as He has chosen. Thus would their fasting draw down a blessing from Him.

3. Consider that the Ember Weeks are also set aside by the Church of Christ for giving Holy Orders, which by apostolical tradition, and by the example of the Apostles, ought to be accompanied with prayer and fasting (Acts xiii. 2, 3, xiv. 22). Yes, Christians, as there is nothing on which both the general good of the Church and the welfare of every soul in particular so much depends, as upon having saints for our pastors, and such as may be men according to God's own heart, who both by word and work may continually promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls; so there is nothing which more pressingly calls for prayer and fasting, than the obtaining of such pastors from God. This should indeed have a great part in our devotions at all times, but more especially at these times of ordination. Bad priests are sometimes permitted by God, as one of His most dreadful judgments upon the sins of the people. It is the business then of all Christians, by prayer and good works, to avert this judgment, and to obtain faithful guides.

Conclusion. Labour by more than ordinary devotion and penance at these holy times, to answer all the ends of these ancient institutions. This Ember Week in particular, and all the latter part of Advent (that is, twelve whole days before Christmas), by an ancient custom of the primitive English Church, was dedicated by our Catholic ancestors to fasting, watchings, prayer, and alms: and all the faithful, at this time, betook themselves to confession and penance, in order to prepare themselves for a worthy participation of the Body of the Lord, on Christmas-day, as we learn from B. Egbert, who was Archbishop of York about a thousand years ago (*in Dialogo de Ecclesiasticâ Institutione*). Oh how much have we degenerated from this ancient piety!

DECEMBER 23.

On Preparation for the Birth of Christ.

1. Consider that when the time drew near, in which the world was to be blessed with the birth of our Saviour: the Blessed Virgin, who bore Him in her womb, and her chaste spouse St. Joseph, in obedience to the edict of the Emperor Augustus, took a journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, there to be enrolled in the city of David, as they were both of the royal stock of David. The Emperor, in giving these orders, had no other view than to gratify his vanity, or his avarice, by the tax imposed on that occasion. But God who had ordained, and foretold by His Prophet Micheas, that His Son should be born in Bethlehem, was pleased to fulfil His eternal decrees in this manner: and to prepare a place for His birth suitable to the great designs for which He sent Him into the world. For behold after a long and wearisome winter's journey, when the Blessed Mother, with the Son of God in her womb, arrived at Bethlehem, the town was full; and none of the inhabitants, not even their own kindred and family, would receive them into their houses, or give them any entertainment; the very inns would not lodge them; there was no room for them. O ye heavens, stand astonished to see the Son of God, the Lord and Maker of heaven and earth, thus debase Himself, from the very beginning, as not to allow Himself, even in His very birth, any of the common conveniences of life; not so much as a house to cover His head! Let Him be so much the more dear to us, by as much as He has made Himself mean and contemptible for the love of us.

2. Consider what kind of a place the King of Heaven prepared for the birth of His Son. St. Joseph, after seeking in vain for a lodging in the town, found at last an open stable, or stall for beasts, exposed to the inclemency of the weather; which for want of better accommodation, their poverty and humility were contented to take refuge in. And this was the palace the divine wisdom made choice of, for the birth of our great King; the manger which had served for the ox and the ass, was the royal bed of state in which He was laid on coming amongst us. Oh how has the Word Incarnate here annihilated Himself for us! How loudly has He condemned, from His very birth, our corrupt self-love with all the maxims of worldly pride, and the favourite inclinations of flesh and blood. Man fell originally from God, by proudly affecting a superior excellence which might make him like to God, coveting what God did not allow him; and seeking to gratify his sensual appetite with the forbidden fruit: therefore the Son of God begins His mortal life by the exercise

of most profound humility, to cure our pride; by embracing poverty, even to the want of all things, in opposition to our covetousness and love of the mammon of the world; and by choosing for Himself hardships and sufferings in opposition to our love of sensual and worldly pleasures. Let us study well the lessons which this heavenly master begins to teach us by His example, even from His first appearance amongst us.

3. Consider, Christian souls, that the Son of God, who came down from heaven, to be born into this world for you, earnestly desires at present to be spiritually born in you. See then, that you correspond on your part with this desire, by preparing your souls for Him, and giving them up to Him. Be not like those unhappy Bethlemites who refused Him a place in their houses, and would not find room for Him! But if you are willing to admit Him, take care to send away such company as is disagreeable to Him. For how great soever His desire is, of being spiritually born in your souls, He will not come thither so long as you wilfully entertain there His and your mortal enemies, the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life; those very enemies whom He came from heaven to fight against; and against whom He has declared eternal war, by the austerity, poverty, and humility of His birth, His education, and His whole life and death. Moreover, if you desire to have Him to abide in you, by virtue of a spiritual birth, you must allow Him the chief place in your heart and soul, by driving far away from you all irregular affections to the world, or to any creature whatsoever. For though He did not disdain the stable nor the crib, the ox nor the ass, He will not endure a heart divided, or occupied by unclean affections.

Conclusion. Let nothing be wanting on your part to ensure the happiness of having the Son of God spiritually born in your soul. Invite Him thither, with all possible affection; be ready to give up all things that He may abide with you: and beg of Him who knows your poverty and misery, that He would prepare Himself a place in you, and furnish your souls with those ornaments of virtue and grace which are suitable to His spiritual birth.

DECEMBER 24.

On the Birth of Christ.

1. Consider that the time being now come in which the Son of God was to be born into this world, in the silence of the night and in the obscurity of a stable; the Eternal Word of God, by whom all things were made, issued forth from His nine months' confinement in His mother's womb, without any detriment of her virginal integrity; and so came to dwell amongst us. See,

my soul, and contemplate with thy inward eyes this lovely babe, how lovely indeed, and loving to us! already beginning to suffer for thee, and to weep bitterly for thy sins. See how this blessed Mother takes Him up from the ground, shivering with cold; see with what profound reverence on the one hand, and with what ardent love on the other, she embraces Him, and carefully wraps Him up in swaddling clothes, and lays Him in the manger. But see also in the midst of all the poverty and humility of this new-born King, the heavenly choirs of angels and archangels, and the cherubim and seraphim descending from heaven to adore their Lord, and to sing their hymns of praise and glory to Him: according to that of the Apostle (Heb. i. 6), that when God brought His first-born into the world He said: "Let all the angels of God adore Him." Christians, let us join with these heavenly spirits: let us join with the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, in our homage and adoration, praise and thanksgiving to the Son of God, born into this world to be our Emmanuel (God with us), and to save us; let us welcome Him at His birth, and embrace Him with all the affection of our souls.

2. Consider what we read (Luke ii.): that at the time of the birth of our Lord, "There were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night watches over their flock. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them, Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people; for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying, Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will!" See, Christians, you study well the lessons designed for you in this passage. Behold a heavenly messenger is sent to carry the first news, the happy tidings, of the birth of the Son of God; born into this world to be its Saviour. But to whom do you think does God send this joyful message, this heavenly embassy? Not to any of the great ones of this world, nor to any of the worldly wise, nor to the learned, nor to the rich, nor to any of them that lived at their ease, and wallowed in sensual pleasures: No: their pride and self-conceit, their love of the world and of the things of the world, their love of sensual and carnal pleasures, fastened them down to earth, and disqualified them for the visits of heaven. What manner of men then were they who were favoured with this glorious vision, and this heavenly message; and in consequence of it were the first, after the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, who had the happiness to see and worship the Saviour of the world; to believe in Him them-

selves, and to publish His coming to their neighbours? They were poor humble shepherds, keeping the night watches over their flock, attentive to the business of their calling, and likely employing that silent time of the night in joining the praise of God and prayer with the care of their sheep. Such as these are commonly the favourites of the Most High, who resists the proud, and gives His grace to the humble. See, my soul, these be also thy dispositions, if thou wouldst be favoured by our Lord with His divine graces.

3. Consider the words of the angel to the shepherds: "I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people, for this day is born to you a Saviour." See, Christians, what ought to be the subject of your joy at this holy time: a Saviour is this day born to you, who comes to save His people from their sins; who comes to deliver you from the power and slavery of the devil, from hell and damnation, and to bring to you mercy, grace, and salvation. Here is a just subject of true joy indeed! Not like the joys of worldlings, which are either vain and foolish, or base and filthy; but a joy in the Lord and in His goodness, which opens to us by this mystery the gate of joy that shall never end. Let us then join with the heavenly choirs in the sacred hymn they sung on this occasion: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will!" Let us glorify Him who wrought these wonders for us, and who has sent us by the birth of His Son, justice and abundance of peace till the moon be taken away. How lovely and desirable is this peace! But it is bestowed only on men of good will: "For there is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord" (Isa. xlviii. 22).

Conclusion. Imitate the shepherds, by going over with them in spirit to Bethlehem this night, and there pay your homage and make your offerings to your new-born King. The offering He calls for is that of your heart. Give it Him without reserve! But let it be a loving heart, to answer that love which brought Him down from heaven to you; let it be a contrite and humble heart, in consideration of your ingratitude and manifold sins against Him.

DECEMBER 25.

On Christmas Day.

1. Consider that the devotion of this holy time, and of this day in particular, calls us to the crib of Bethlehem, there to contemplate our infant Saviour, and to entertain our souls with Him. What a field have we here opened to us for our meditation! Christians, place yourselves in spirit near the manger of our Lord, and fix the eyes of your soul upon Him. Reflect, who

this is whom you see lying before you, as a helpless infant, in this open stable; suffering and weeping, poor and humble, wrapped in mean swaddling clothes, and laid in this crib between an ox and ass? Your faith will inform you that under these mean appearances there lies concealed the Lord of glory! This infant, not yet one day old, is the eternal Son of the eternal God; this weak helpless babe is He who by His almighty power made both heaven and earth; He who is here wrapped up so straitly and confined to this narrow crib, fills heaven and earth with His incomprehensible immensity; this speechless child is God's own Word, who called all things out of nothing, and whom all things obey. Oh, wonderful mystery, which has thus joined together the highest and the lowest; all that is great in heaven, with all that is little and contemptible upon earth, in the person of this infant God! But what is the meaning of all this? What has brought this great God down to this stable, to this crib? Why has He thus debased and annihilated Himself? My soul, it is for thy sake; it is for love of thee; it is to redeem and deliver thee from sin and hell; it is to give an example of all virtue; it is to draw thy heart to Himself, and to engage thee to love Him.

2. Consider and study well the lessons which the Son of God desires to teach thee from the crib. Learn to be humble by the contemplation of His unparalleled humiliations, which He so joyfully embraces for thy sake; learn to be poor in spirit, by the consideration of His voluntary poverty; learn mortification and self-denial, by the view of His sufferings, which are all of His own choice. Learn of Him to despise this cheating world and its empty show, its painted toys, its childish amusements, and all the allurement of its sensual pleasures, which He, who is the wisdom of God, despises and condemns in His birth. But especially apply thyself to study well, and to learn from the contemplation of the Son of God in the crib, the infinite charity of God, His infinite love for thee, and the infinite enormity of sin, by which we continually rebel against this infinite charity. Oh, if thou couldst but penetrate with thy inward eyes into the heart of thy infant God, what heavenly flames wouldst thou not there discover, of more than seraphic love for thee? Thou wouldst meet thyself, in the midst of the heart of thy Saviour, where He has so long given thee a place. There thou wouldst effectually learn both to hate thy sins and to love thy God.

3. Consider the affections which ought to accompany thy meditations, in the stable of Bethlehem, if thou desirest to entertain in a proper manner thy new-born King and Saviour. Thou must exercise thyself in acts of three divine or theological virtues; of lively faith in this thy infant God and His sacred truths, which lie concealed in this mystery of His incarnation and birth; all the wonders of Almighty power, wisdom

and goodness, which He has wrought for the love of us; and of all the treasures of heaven, which He brings with Him to communicate to our souls: of most firm hope and confidence in His infinite power, mercy, and goodness; which He discovers to thee in this mystery, of most ardent love for Him, in return for that love which He here shows thee. Then pour forth thy soul in His presence, in acts of adoration, praise, and glory; in acts of thanksgiving for all He has done for thee, and for the whole world; in acts of oblation of thy whole being, and of all the powers of thy soul, to His love and service; and make at His feet, who is come to be the great High Priest of God and man, humble confession of thy sins, with most hearty sorrow and contrition, for having ever offended so good a God; craving mercy, pardon and absolution of Him, and through Him, and firmly resolving upon a new life for the future.

Conclusion. Let this be thy daily exercise during the holy time of Christmas; and suffer not worldly entertainments or diversions to keep thee out of the company of thy Saviour, at least so far as to hinder thee from waiting often on Him, and spending a competent part of thy time with Him, in proper meditations and affections. If thou art at a loss to know how thou oughtest to entertain thyself with Him, beg of Him to teach thee; for He comes to be thy teacher. And if thou art sensible of the meanness of thy own performances, in point of adoration, praise, glory and thanksgiving, offer to the eternal Father the adoration, praise, glory and thanksgiving of thy new-born Saviour, to supply thy defects.

DECEMBER 26.

On St. Stephen.

1. Consider that St. Stephen was the first martyr; that is, the first who bore witness to the divinity of Jesus Christ, by laying down his life for Him: the first who after the Death and Passion of the Son of God returned Him blood for blood, life for life; the first who was so happy as to be made a victim of divine love, a holocaust of sweet savour in the sight of God; in fine, the first who washed his robes by martyrdom in the blood of the Lamb, and is now at the head of His heavenly train, "who stand before the throne of God and serve Him day and night, in His temple, where He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell over them; and they shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them nor any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall rule them, and shall lead them to the living fountains of waters" (Apoc. vii. 15, &c.). What a glory, what a happiness is it, to lay down life itself for divine love! But

alas! how far are the generality of Christians from this perfection of charity, who are so unwilling to suffer even the least inconvenience, for the sake of their heavenly Lover? And is not this our case too? Let us at least love these generous followers of our God: let us conceive a holy envy for their happiness, by sighing and praying for a share of their charity and love.

2. Consider the character that is given to St. Stephen by the Spirit of God. He was a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost (Acts vi. 5). He was full of grace and fortitude, and did great wonders and miracles among the people (ver. 8). By his zeal the word of the Lord increased, and the number of the disciples was multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly (ver. 7). And though many adversaries rose up, who disputed against him, there were none of them able to resist the wisdom and spirit that spoke (ver. 10). And when he was hurried by them before the council: all that were there "saw his face, as if it had been the face of an angel" (ver. 15). His zeal for the faith of Christ, and the courage and constancy with which he maintained it before the council, was rewarded with a heavenly vision, in which he saw the glory of God, and the Lord Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts vii. 55). And his bearing testimony to this truth brought on his martyrdom: for presently "casting him forth out of the city, they stoned him, invoking the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, saying, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep in the Lord" (Acts viii. 57, 58, 59). Christians, what admirable lessons and examples have we not here of all the virtues, in an heroic degree, in the life and death of this glorious saint? He was full of faith; he was full of the Holy Ghost and His gifts; he was full of grace, of fortitude, of zeal, of heavenly wisdom, of divine charity; in a word, he was full of God, and of all good. How happy shall we be, if we seriously endeavour to walk in the footsteps of this great saint, by imitation of his virtues!

3. Consider that as amongst the virtues of St. Stephen, none was more remarkable than his charity; so none more pressingly calls for our imitation. Charity has two branches, the love of God and of our neighbour: the love of God with our whole heart, and with our whole soul; and the love of our neighbour as ourselves. The love of God is exercised by seeking and promoting in all things, the glory of God, by sanctifying His name, both by word and work; by labouring to propagate His kingdom; by the perpetual dedication of our whole selves to His divine service. Thus did St. Stephen continually exercise himself in the most perfect acts of the love of God, not by the bare profession of the tongue, but by works and in truth. In like manner the love of our neighbour is exercised by seeking and

promoting his true and everlasting welfare, upon all occasions, by withdrawing him from the error of his ways and from the broad road that leads to perdition, and bringing him to God and His grace: thus also did St. Stephen continually exercise himself in the most perfect acts of the love of his neighbour, by his preaching and his prayers; by his zeal for the salvation of souls; and by sparing no pains to bring them to Christ, though this charity cost him his life. Now "greater love than this no man hath, that a man should lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). But the most difficult point of all in charity, as regards our neighbour, is love of our enemies: of which St. Stephen has given us a most glorious example in his last dying prayer for them that were actually stoning him. Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.

Conclusion. Honour this great saint, by diligently imitating his love for his God, his zeal for His glory, and for the salvation of souls, his fortitude and constancy in sufferings, and his charity for his enemies. And to this end beg the assistance of his prayers.

DECEMBER 27.

On St. John the Apostle and Evangelist.

1. Consider upon how many accounts we ought to honour St. John, the beloved disciple of the Son of God; and to glorify God in him, for His extraordinary gifts and graces bestowed upon him. He was called in his youth, whilst innocent and pure, to follow our Lord Jesus; and he readily obeyed the call, and left his parents and all things else for the sake of Christ. His zeal and fortitude in the cause of his Master procured him the name of Boanerges, or son of thunder. The purity of his soul and body made him a special favourite of his Lord; who therefore admitted him to lean upon His bosom at the last supper, and to draw from that sacred fountain of life the heavenly waters of grace and truth; and on the following day, when dying upon the cross, He recommended His Virgin Mother to his care, that she might be his Mother, and he might be her son. O blessed saint, great favourite both of Jesus and Mary, introduce us also, by the interest thou hast now in heaven, into some share in their favour; by procuring for us by thy prayers, the grace to imitate thy purity.

2. Consider to what a height St. John was raised by divine grace. He was made an Apostle, and one of the chief of the Apostles; even one of the three who were chosen by our Lord to be witnesses both of His glory on Mount Thabor, and of His anguish and agony on Mount Olivet. He was also an Evangelist or writer of the Gospel, and amongst the four Evangelists, is

compared to the eagle because of his sublime beginning, by taking flight up to the Eternal Word, by whom all things were made; and following throughout his whole Gospel the same sublime course, with his eye still fixed on this great Sun of Justice, and the immense light of His Divinity. St. John was also a martyr by drinking of the chalice of his Lord, as He had foretold, by a long course of sufferings; and by being at length sentenced to death, by the tyrant Domitian, and cast into a vessel of boiling oil, whence he was delivered by an evident miracle. In fine he was a prophet, to whom our Lord revealed an infinity of heavenly secrets and mysteries relating to latter times, which we find recorded in the Apocalypse, written during his banishment in the isle of Patmos. See then, my soul, how many titles this great saint has to our veneration. But remember at the same time that the veneration which will please him best, will be the love and imitation of his virtues.

3. Consider that the writings of St. John recommend nothing so much as charity and truth. These they continually inculcate: charity, because God is charity; He is all love, He has died for love of us; let us therefore love God, saith he, because God first hath loved us. But then this is the love of God, this is the charity we owe Him, to keep His commandments. And this commandment we have from God, that we should love one another. This love for one another his epistles are full of, this sweet odour they all breathe, with this they join truth, loving in truth, walking in truth, for the sake of the truth, which abideth in us, and shall be with us for ever. And what is this truth, but the Son of God Himself, the way, the truth, and the life? Such was the doctrine of St. John: this he perpetually preached, both by word and writing: such was the spirit of this disciple of love.

Conclusion. Embrace with all thy soul, this charity and truth so much recommended by St. John, or rather by the Spirit of God, through him. Keep close to this charity here, and it will abide with thee hereafter, and will make thee happy for endless ages.

DECEMBER 28.

On the Holy Innocents.

1. Consider that the Son of God, who came to be the Saviour of the world, was no sooner born, but He began to be persecuted by the children of this world. The wicked King Herod, to secure to himself and his family the temporal kingdom of Judea, seeks the life of this new-born King, of whose birth he had been informed by the sages of the East, and in order to compass his impious design, employs craft, and when this was eluded,

open violence, by the barbarous massacre of the Innocents. But all to no purpose than to show how vain are the designs and efforts of men against the decrees of God ; according to that of the wise man (Prov. xxi. 30), "There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord." Our new-born Saviour, by divine admonition, was carried away to Egypt, out of reach of the tyrant, and all his barbarity served only to render the birth of the Messias more illustrious, by spreading the fame of it through the world, and to crown at the same time so many innocent martyrs ; whilst for his own part, it brought perpetual odium upon his infamous memory, which no length of time can ever efface ; and drew down most terrible judgments (within the compass of a year) upon his head : and as to his numerous family, for which he was so solicitous, they quickly lost the kingdom, and were in a short time totally extirpated. Christians, how sad a thing it is to fight against our Saviour, by wilful sin, and how dismal are the consequences of it.

2. Consider that we read (Matt. ii. 16, &c.,) "Then Herod perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men, was exceeding angry, and sending killed all the male children that were in Bethlehem, and in the borders thereof, from two years old and under." These, my soul, are the Holy Innocents, whose feast we celebrate this day, as happy martyrs, bearing testimony, not by their words but by their blood, to the birth of the Son of God. These are the first victims immolated as so many lambs, to illustrate the coming of our Lamb of God, born into this world, to take away the sins of the world. These are the first flowers of the martyrs cropped in the very bud, by the impious persecutor of Christ ; these the first-fruits produced by the coming of our Lord, and presented by Him to His Father : to be followed by that abundant harvest, out of all nations, of innumerable glorious champions of Christ, who should maintain His cause by the testimony of their blood. To these the Church applies, in the lesson of this day, that of Apocalypse xiv. 4, 5, "These are they, who were not defiled with women : for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from amongst men, the first-fruits to God, and to the Lamb : and in their mouth there was found no lie : for they are without spot before the throne of God." Let us honour these first martyrs of the Son of God !

3. Consider that purity, innocence, and temporal sufferings, are by divine appointment the way to eternal happiness. By this road the Holy Innocents arrived thither : how happy are all who are walking in this road ! See then, Christians, how greatly you are deceived, in flying so much from sufferings, since these will bring you to your God. There was lamentation and great mourning in Bethlehem, of the mothers of the Holy Innocents : they were not to be comforted, because they had lost their children. In the meantime, there was great joy in heaven, for their happy

transmigration to a region of endless bliss. Thus where the world is sorrowful, heaven rejoices; because the sufferings of this short time, purchased for the sufferers an eternal weight of glory in that blessed kingdom: whereas they who are without sufferings are in danger of never coming thither.

Conclusion. Embrace whatsoever share may be appointed thee in the sufferings of this life, as designed by divine Providence to help thee to heaven. Assure thyself that God knows what is best for thee, and that He sends thee what He knows to be the best. Had not the Innocents been brought to God by means of their sufferings, they might have lived to crucify their Lord; and instead of being eternally happy, would have been eternally miserable.

DECEMBER 29.

On the Gospel of the good Shepherd (John x.*) read on the Feast of* St. Thomas *of Canterbury.*

1. Consider that the Son of God, by His incarnation and birth, came amongst us not only to be our Father, and our head; our king, our priest, and our sacrifice; our brother and our friend; our physician, and our advocate, but also recommends Himself to us in this Gospel, under the amiable quality of the good shepherd and pastor of our souls. "I am the good shepherd," saith He (ver. 11), "the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. But the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and runneth away, and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep: but the hireling runneth away, because he is a hireling; and he hath no care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know Mine, and Mine know me. As the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father: and I lay down My life for My sheep." Christians, how happy are we in such a shepherd; so great, so good, so loving, so careful of our true welfare! He is the good shepherd indeed, who came down from heaven to seek the poor sheep that was lost; and when He had found it, took it upon His own shoulders, to carry it home with joy, to His heavenly fold. (Luke xv.) How dearly have His sheep cost Him! How truly has He made good in Himself that sentence; that the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep! Let us ever embrace and love, follow and obey, this true shepherd of our souls.

2. Consider in how many ways this heavenly shepherd is daily providing for the necessities of His sheep; and the tender affection He perpetually shows them. "The Lord ruleth me" (or as it is in the original, is my shepherd), saith the Psalmist

(Ps. xxii.) "and I shall want nothing: He hath set me in a place of pasture." Yes, Christians, He has placed our souls in the midst of rich pastures of His divine Word and Sacraments in the communion of His Church. He hath brought us up by the streams of the living waters of His grace, which are ever flowing to refresh and nourish us. He conducts us to the paths of justice, He converts our souls; even when we are walking in the midst of the shadow of death, His rod and His staff still comfort and support us. But give ear, my soul, to what follows in the same psalm. "Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me. Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and Thy chalice which inebriated me, how goodly is it! Here are benefits indeed of this Divine Pastor of our souls: He has prepared a table for us, from which He feeds His sheep, with His own most sacred body and blood: He anoints our heads with the divine oil of His Holy Spirit, and He inebriates us with the goodly chalice of His passion, continually offered up on our altars, to be a plentiful source to us of heavenly grace. And in consequence of the favours already bestowed on us, He encourages us to conclude with the royal prophet: "that His mercy will follow us all the days of our life; and that we shall dwell in the house of the Lord unto length of days, even to a happy eternity.

3. Consider what we owe, in quality of sheep of Christ, to this divine shepherd. He tells us (John x. 3, 4, 5), "That His sheep hear the voice of their shepherd; that He calleth His sheep by name and leadeth them out; that He goeth before them; and that the sheep follow Him, because they know His voice; but a stranger they follow not, but fly from him, because they know not the voice of strangers." And again (ver. 27, 28), "My sheep hear My voice; and I know them; and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life; and they shall not perish for ever; and no man shall snatch them out of My hand." Christians, do we keep close to this heavenly Shepherd? Do we follow Him both by our faith, and by our life? Do we know Him, and hear His voice? Do we fly from strangers, the world, the flesh, and the devil? If so, we are His sheep indeed; and if we persevere, He will bring us in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the pastures of eternal life. But if we run away from our shepherd, to follow strangers, we must expect to fall a prey to the wolves.

Conclusion. Embrace your divine Saviour, under this amiable character of the pastor and shepherd of your souls; and as nothing has been wanting on His side to fulfil to the utmost perfection, even beyond all expression and imagination, every part of the character of the good shepherd; see nothing be wanting on your side to fulfil, by perpetual correspondence with His grace, every part of the character of good sheep.

DECEMBER 30.

On the conclusion of the Year.

1. Consider that the year is now all but come to a conclusion, it is just on the point of expiring; the twelve months that are past have flowed away into the gulf of eternity; they are now no more; they can never return to us. All our years pass in this manner, they hasten away one after another and hurry us along with them, till they bring us also into an endless and unchangeable eternity. Our years will soon be over; we shall find ourselves at the end of our lives, much sooner than we imagine. Let us not then set our hearts upon transitory things? let us despise all that passes away with this short life, and learn to adhere to God alone, who never passes away, because He is eternal. Let us always be prepared for our departure hence.

2. Consider that as the year is now past and gone, so are all the pleasures of it: our diversions, our amusements, in which we have spent our time this year, are no more: the remembrance of them is like a dream. Such is the condition of all things that pass with time! Why then do we set our esteem or affection upon any of them? Why are we not practically and feelingly convinced of the emptiness and vanity of them all: and that nothing deserves our love or attention but God and eternity? And as the pleasures of the year are past, so are the displeasures and uneasinesses, pains and mortifications of it: they also are now no more than as a dream: and so will all temporal evils appear to us, a little while hence, when we shall find ourselves on the brink of eternity. Let us learn then only to fear those evils which will have no end; and the evil of sin, which leads to these never-ending evils.

3. Consider how you have spent your time this year. It was given you by your Creator, in order to help you forward to Him, and to a happy eternity. How many favours and blessings have you received from Him every day of the year! How many graces and invitations to good! And what use have you made of these favours? What virtue have you acquired this year? What vice have you rooted out? What passions have you overcome? Have you made any improvement at all in virtue, since the beginning of the year? Instead of going forward to God, have you not rather gone backward? Alas! what account shall you have to give one day for all this precious time! and for all these graces and blessings spiritual or temporal which you have so ungratefully abused, and perverted during the course of this year? Then as to sins, whether of omission or commission against God, your neighbours, or yourselves: which you have been guilty of this year, either by thought, word, or deed; what a dreadful scene

will open itself to your eyes upon a little examination! And little have you done during the course of this year, to cancel them by penance! How melancholy would your case be, if your eternal lot were to be determined by your performances of this past year!

Conclusion. Give thanks to God for all His blessings of this year; and especially for His patience and forbearance with you in your sins. Return now at least to Him with your whole heart: begging mercy and pardon for the sins of the year, and for all the sins of your life. And resolve with God's grace, if He is pleased to give you another year, to spend it in such manner as to secure to your souls the never ending year of a happy eternity.

DECEMBER 31.

On the Gospel of girding the Loins, &c. (*Luke xii.* 35, *&c.*), *read for St. Silvester.*

1. Consider those words of our Lord to His disciples, and through them to all Christians; "Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands; and be you like men who wait for their Lord, when He shall return from the wedding; that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open to Him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching." Girding our loins, and having lamps burning in our hands, are to be taken in a spiritual sense: and contain great and necessary lessons for every part of our lives. As we know not the hour when our Lord will come to us, and knock at our door by death, we must keep ourselves awake, and in a proper posture and readiness, to open to Him without delay, and welcome Him. Now this proper posture and readiness to welcome our Lord, whensoever He shall come and knock, consists chiefly in these two things; in having our loins girt by constant restraint of our irregular inclinations and lusts; and having lamps burning in our hands by the constant exercise of Christian virtues; which may shine forth to the glory of God, and the edification of our neighbours. And those servants are happy indeed, who are always waiting for the coming of their Lord, with their loins girt in this manner, and holding such lamps as these always burning in their hands.

2. Consider what follows in the same Gospel, with regard to the immense reward of these same faithful servants. "Amen, I say to you, that their Lord will gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister to them." Christians, what an honour, what happiness is here promised us; if our Lord at His coming shall find us watching! He will gird Himself to be ready to wait upon us: He will make us sit down to

table ; and will pass and minister to us. What incomprehensible joys are here signified, by our Lord's ministering to us ; by His making Himself, as it were, over to us, to be perpetually enjoyed by us ! What a table is this, at which we shall be invited to sit down, to be eternally entertained by Him, with all the delights of heaven ; with the sweet fruits of the tree of life, and the delicious waters of the fountain of life ! And lest we should be discouraged with the apprehension of being excluded from this eternal banquet, because we have already passed a good part of our lives without being in that readiness which our Lord expects of us, He adds for our comfort, that "if He shall come in the second watch ; or if He come in the third watch ; and shall then find us watching, we shall still be happy. Blessed, said He, are those servants." So that, if we have hitherto been careless : if we have let the first, or even the second watch pass, without being upon our guard ; and He has been so good as not to come and surprise us, let us now at least awake, let us gird our loins and have our lamps for the future burning in our hands : and we may still be blessed.

3. Consider the remaining words of this Gospel : "But this know ye," saith our Lord, "that if the householder knew at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch, and not suffer his house to be broken open. Be ye also ready, for at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come." This is that great lesson, of always watching which our Saviour inculcates as our only security against the dreadful evil of an unprovided death, and all those endless evils which are the unhappy consequences of such a death. Let us lay up this lesson in our hearts ; let us meditate daily upon it ; let us conform ourselves to it in the practice of our lives. Let us always watch ! Our Lord, who has borne with us all this year ; has in the meantime knocked at the door of thousands of others, who this day twelvemonth, were as likely to live as ourselves. Their bodies are now corrupting in the grave ; but where are their souls ? And where shall our bodies, where shall our souls be, a twelvemonth hence ? Let us then be always ready ; because we know not the day nor the hour when our Lord shall come.

Conclusion. Observe well these evangelical prescriptions, of girding your loins, of having your lamps ever burning in your hands ; and of being always ready to open the door to Him ; and you shall not fail of being of the number of those happy servants, who shall enter into the eternal joy of their Lord.

THE END.

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